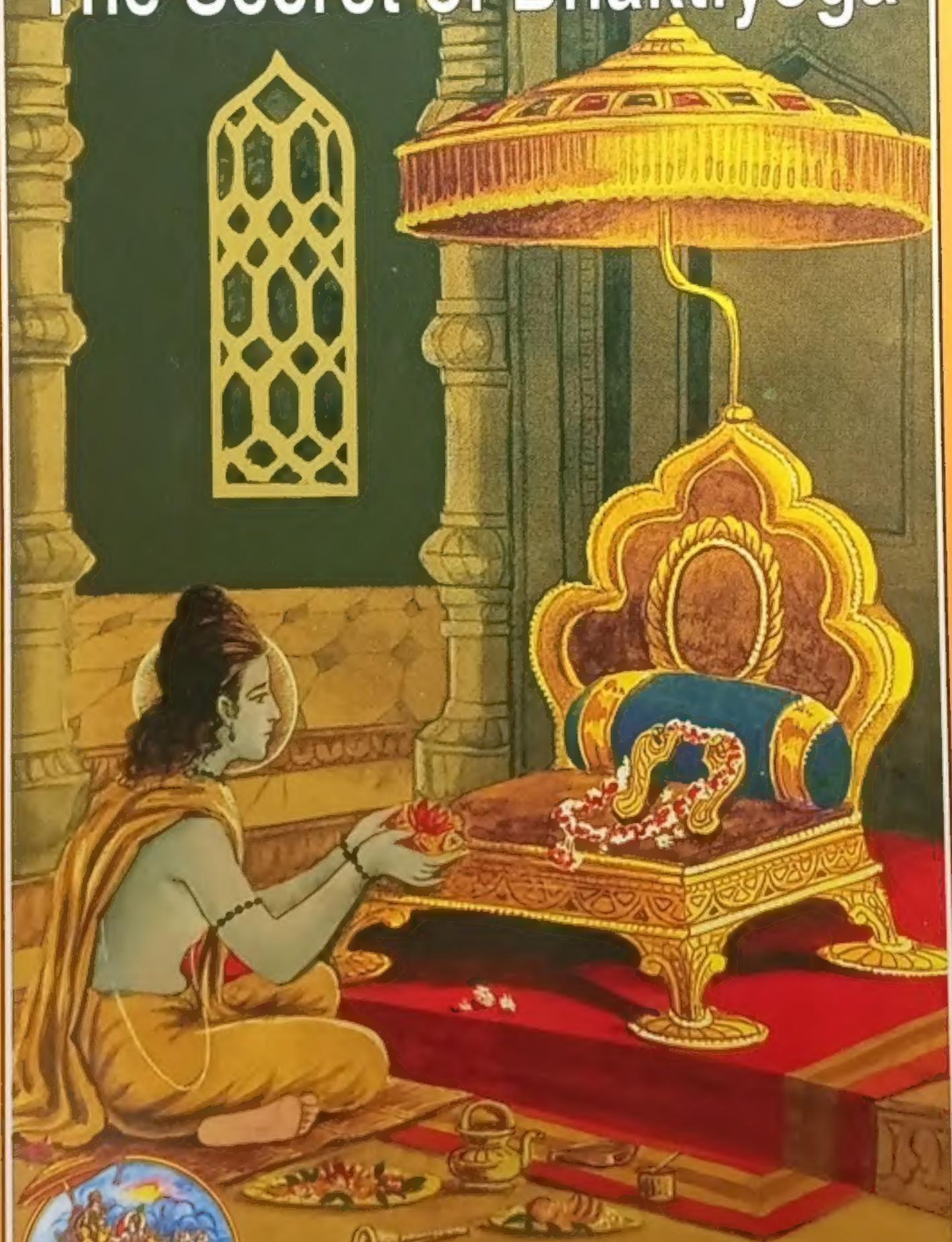


The Secret of Bhaktiyoga



Jayadayal Goyandka

The Secret of Bhaktiyoga

tvameva	mātā	ca	pitā	tvameva
tvameva	bandhuśca	sakhā	tvameva	tvameva
tvameva	vidyā	draviṇāṁ	tvameva	tvameva
tvameva	sarvam	mama	devadeva	devadeva
त्वमेव	माता	च	पिता	त्वमेव
त्वमेव	बन्धुश्च	सखा		त्वमेव ।
त्वमेव	विद्या	द्रविणं		त्वमेव
त्वमेव	सर्वं	मम		देवदेव ॥

Jayadayal Goyandka

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Publisher's Note

We feel happy to present 'The Secret of Bhaktiyoga' by Nitya BrahmaLina Late Shri Jayadayal Goyandka in the hands of our reader devotees who are already familiar with the author and his accomplishments and no more require any introduction.

The present book is a compilation of his discourses published in 'The Kalyana-Kalpataru' from time to time. It contains 24 articles on Bhaktiyoga embracing almost all topics in regard of devotion. How to practise Bhakti, how to meditate upon God, nine forms of Bhakti illustrated and explained with the example of Bharata, the glory of Satsaṅga quoting some examples of devotees, name, form, sports and secrets of the Lord and the concept of reverence exemplifying with Rāma-Kathā, are some important topics and are most valuable for those who are treading the path of devotion. It is in a way a handbook to and beacon light for the beginners and worth reading even for the accomplished devotees.

We feel sorry that we could not publish it earlier. In the end we apologise for any shortcomings and request our readers to enlighten us on the point to enable us to remove the errors in future editions.

Publisher

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The Glory of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa

Some friends have asked me to write on the transcendent greatness of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa; but, when I deliberate on the subject, I begin to feel my own limitation. When even the Devas (gods), Ṛsis (seers) and saints failed to fathom His greatness and majesty, what wonder that an ordinary mortal like me should hesitate to sound the illimitable depth of that divine ocean? Although such is my honest and sincere belief, yet for the satisfaction of my heart and for the pleasure of friends, I am making this attempt to record my humble thoughts on the subject. Readers versed in the sacred lore will kindly overlook my deficiencies and take my words as the prattlings of an immature soul.

Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa was a direct manifestation of the Supreme Brahma (Divinity); in other words, the Supreme Brahma Itself appeared on this earth in the form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. All our ancient scriptures are full of descriptions of His divine qualities and glory, of the wonderful, instructive and enchanting stories of His Līlās (Divine activities). It is well-known that the Mahābhārata, the Jaiminīyāśvamedha and Purāṇas such as Śrīmad Bhāgavata and others are interspersed with descriptions of the supernatural Love, glory and majesty of the Lord. To appear at the time of birth in the transcendent form with four hands and then immediately to assume the form of a human child; to show mother Yaśodā a glimpse of the whole cosmos within the cavity of His mouth; to call into existence new cowherd boys and calves; to appear before Akrūra in the same Form simultaneously within the waters of the Yamunā and as

seated in the chariot on the road; to kill as a matter of sport Kamsa and other terrible Asuras (demons); to recall from the other world the dead child of His preceptor as well those of a Brāhmaṇa and mother Devakī; to assume as many forms as there were palaces of His queens at Dvārakā and live in them all at once; to cause Draupadī's wearing apparel to extend to an indefinite length on her seeking protection from Him even mentally; to appear suddenly before Draupadī when she remembered Him through helplessness in connection with the problem of entertainment of the irascible Ṛṣi Durvāsā in the forest; to appear in Universal Form before the Kauravas assembled in Court; to show Arjuna the Universal as well as the four-handed Form in the course of exposition of the secrets of Devotion and Knowledge; for the protection of Arjuna on the day of Jayadratha's death to hide the sun from view and then to make it reappear; on the termination of the great war making Arjuna descend from the chariot first and then on His leaving the chariot the same being reduced to ashes without any ostensible cause and the phenomenon being explained by saying that the powerful shafts of Bhīṣma and Drona had already reduced it to ashes, but it had been kept working only by the power of His thought; removing all the physical pain of Bhīṣma lying on the bed of arrows, and investing him with unlimited strength, energy and knowledge; to appear before Ṛṣi Uttan̄ka in a Form that manifested His transcendent majesty and glory; to give life to the still-born Parīkṣit; during the Aśvamedha sacrifice suddenly to arrive from Dvārakā at night on the Pāṇḍavas remembering Him for help; during the combat with Sudhanvā to appear suddenly on the battlefield on Arjuna's seeking His help and to take up the reins of the chariot in His hands, and finally, returning to His Supreme Abode in the selfsame

Body that was manifested on earth; these, and other supernatural incidents like these, definitely prove that such actions were not only impossible for a human being, but were beyond the capacity of even the Devas to perform. An attempt is being made in this small article to discuss briefly some of the unparalleled activities of the Lord.

Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa was the very image of Love and Bliss. He appeared on this earth in human form for the establishment and propagation of Dharma. What soul is there that will not dissolve and feel a thrill of delight when the stream of pure and transcendent love which the Lord let loose on earth is discovered or realized by him? But a knowledge of the secrets of His Sports (Līlās) and the inwardness of His impenetrable Love can be attained only by grace of the Lord. A perusal of the descriptions of His Love with the Gopīs appearing in Śrīmad Bhāgavata and other sacred books gives rise to many a doubt in the minds of many readers. The literal meaning of those descriptions gives indications of carnality in that Love; but the subject should be probed a little more deeply. If the love between the Gopīs and the Lord was an indecent carnal love, it could never have been praised by a great soul like Uddhava or a saint and devotee like Mahāprabhu Gourāṅgadeva, whose life was a life of complete renunciation. The love of the Gopīs was not a blind Love based on ignorance; they knew that Śrī Kṛṣṇa was God Himself. The very words of the Gopīs prove the truth of this statement. They said—

न खलु गोपिकानन्दनो भवा-
 नखिलदेहिनामन्तरात्मदृक् ।
 विखनसार्थितो विश्वगुप्तये
 सख उदेयिवान् सात्वतां कुले ॥

“O friend! upon the prayer of Brahmā You have descended

in the line of Yadu for the sustenance of creation. You are not merely a child of Yaśodā, in reality You reside as a witness in the hearts of all created beings.”

This shows that their Love was pure and inspired by wisdom. This Love of the Gopīs was highly praised by all great souls and saints. Not only this, the Lord Himself sang the glory of their Love and spoke to Arjuna as follows—

निजाङ्गमपि या गोप्यो ममेति समुपासते ।
ताभ्यां विना न मे पार्थ निगृहप्रेमभाजनम् ॥

“O Pārtha, the Gopīs take care of their bodies because they are instruments of service to Me. None besides the Gopīs has the unique honour and privilege of being the object of My secret Love.”

Besides, the Lord was an embodiment of Knowledge itself, so it is impossible to believe that He was subject to the taint of sense-pleasure. But the reader may ask, what, then, is the meaning of the descriptions in the Bhāgavata and other Purāṇas savouring of carnality or sense-pleasure? In my humble opinion there is no need to spend time over the attempt to read through the meaning of those words; in books of ancient history, Smṛtis (law-books) or the Purāṇas, wherever passages are found ascribing falsehood, deceit or moral laxity to the Lord, or which sanction the use of liquor and flesh or countenance practices like the vices of untruth, hypocrisy and adultery, they should be skipped over and elevating lessons should be taken from the rest of the book for regulation of conduct.

The world we live in is a transitional world in which time, place and surroundings are in a state of constant flux. Owing to the distance and changes of time the descriptions of happenings in very ancient times found in the Śāstras are not always understandable in all their bearings. Moreover,

owing to the political subjection of the country for a long period under people professing a different faith, it is no wonder if harmful and anti-religious ideas of falsehood, deceit, theft and the like should have been interpolated in our sacred literature. Therefore the responsibility for literally explaining all the facts or teachings recorded in the Purāṇas or for establishing the authenticity or otherwise of any portion thereof by reconciling it with the rest should not be undertaken by ordinary people like us. For we lack the quality of omniscience. Further, when God manifests Himself in human shape and enacts His Līlās, if anything is perceived in the same which appears as contradictory to the spirit of the Śāstras, the faith should be cultivated and entertained that it is altogether impossible that He should be subject to any vice. The actions of the Lord are always divine. At the same time it is not possible to declare the Purāṇas and books of ancient history as untrue or unauthenticated.

Even the Devas and Maharsiṣ fail to apprehend in its entirety the secret of the divine birth and activities of the Lord in this world. The Lord Himself has said—

न मे विदुः सुरगणाः प्रभवं न महर्षयः ।
अहमादिर्हि दैवानां महर्षीणां च सर्वशः ॥

(Gītā X. 2)

“My origin, i.e., manifestation through Līlā with all grandeur and glory is known neither to the hosts of Devas nor to the great Ṛṣis; for in every way I am the source of all the Devas and the great Ṛṣis.”

Although the Ṛṣis who wrote the Purāṇas and ancient books of history were great souls and Yogīs and seers of Truth, yet it was beyond their power to describe in their entirety the glory and Līlās (activities) either of Bhagavān

Śrī Rāma or of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa. What those Mahātmās (great souls) have recorded, is nevertheless true; owing to the limitations of our intellect we cannot perfectly grasp the implications of their thoughts and sentiments and hence ascribe our limitations and ignorance to them.

From the Mahābhārata and other ancient scriptures it is clear that all Ṛsis could not recognize the Lord in human form. Through the grace of the Lord only a few of the Maharsis, who were knowers of Truth, could really make out His identity—

“It is through Thy grace, O scion of Raghu, the comforter of the heart of devotees, that Thy devotees recognize Thee.”

(Rāmacaritamānasa)

The reason for this is that the conduct and activities of the Lord are appropriate to the Body assumed by Him. When, for instance, He appears in human form, He begins to act just like a human being. His human conduct bewilders even wise men, not to speak of ordinary mortals. Śrī Vasiṣṭha spoke to Śrī Rāma thus—

“Through an examination of Your activities and conduct, a sort of stupefaction comes over my mind.”

(Rāmacaritamānasa)

There is a story related in the 53rd chapter of the Aśvamedha-Parva of the Mahābhārata that on the termination of the great war between the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa was returning to Dvārakā having taken leave from emperor Yudhiṣṭhira. On the way He happened to meet Ṛsi Uttaṅka, who was well-known for his devotion to his Guru, and resided in the desert land. When the Ṛsi heard from Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s lips about the wholesale destruction of the Kauravas except of five Pāṇḍavas, he was possessed by an irrepressible anger, and addressing the Lord, said:—“Although You held within Your hand the power to prevent

this bloody and internecine warfare, You deliberately refrained from doing so, for which I shall pronounce a curse on You.” The Lord, however, was extremely kind; He stopped the Ṛṣi from pronouncing the malediction and said in reply. “O chief of devotees, you have obtained the blessings of your Guru (Preceptor), which have invested you and your austerities with a fiery glow; I do not want to destroy the power and virtue of these austerities; your malediction on Me will produce no effect; if you utter the curse, your spiritual power will vanish. Therefore, I invite you to hear from Me the mystery of Knowledge about My true Self and glory.” Then, in the 54th chapter, in reply to Ṛṣi Uttāṅka, the Lord explained to him the object and significance of His manifestation, His glory and the reality about His Self. He said—

“O chief of the twice-born, O son of Bhṛgu, for the protection and establishment of Dharma, I body Myself forth in all the three worlds among various species of living beings and adopt the shape and form of these different species. It is I who am Viṣṇu, Brahmā and Indra. It is I who am the cause of creation as well as of dissolution, I who create all beings and destroy them. I am the Paramātmā, ever permanent in one mode of being; but for the welfare of souls I appear among different species of beings at different periods of this transitional time and strengthen the spirit of religion to bring round souls that pursue an irreligious life.

“O son of Bhṛgu, when I manifest Myself among the Devas, then without doubt I adopt all the manners and conduct of Devas.”

“O son of Bhṛgu, when I appear among the Gandharvas, I begin to behave in every particular like the Gandharvas.”

“When I appear among the Nāgas, I behave like Nāgas

and when among the Yaksas and Rāksasas, I adopt the manners that are appropriate to them."

"At the present time, having appeared among men and adopting the ways of men, I humbly placed my views before those people for a treaty; but they were blinded by their folly and paid no heed to my words."

Hearing such words relating to the glory and truth about the reality of the Lord, the Ṛṣi was fully convinced that Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa was Paramātmā Himself. So with humility he approached the Lord with a prayer to bless him with a vision of the Universal Form. The Lord granted the prayer, and blessed the Ṛṣi with the divine vision. Thereupon Ṛṣi Uttanika began to praise the glory of the Lord. Thus conferring His grace on the Ṛṣi, the Lord made His way towards Dvārakā.

This anecdote of Ṛṣi Uttanika proves that without the grace of the Lord, even Ṛṣis who are devoted to the performance of Yajña (sacrifice), charity and penance and serve the Guru with devotion cannot recognize God manifested in human form. He alone can know the Lord to whom through grace He reveals Himself, and knowing he becomes like the Lord Himself.

"He alone knows to whom You make Yourself known : and knowing You, he becomes like Yourself."

Until God directly blesses an individual and makes Himself known, it is not possible to know the Lord through the instruction or expostulation of another individual. Dhṛitarāṣṭra failed to recognize the Lord in spite of all the efforts made by Sañjaya to explain to him His greatness and glory. In the 68th chapter of the Udyoga-Parva of the Mahābhārata there is a mention of Sañjaya's going to the Pāṇḍavas as an ambassador on behalf of the Kauravas. On his return from the embassy, under instructions of Śrī

Vedavyāsa he describes the majesty and glory of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa thus—

“Where there is truth, where there is Dharma (righteousness), where there is modesty and straightforwardness, there is Kṛṣṇa; and where Kṛṣṇa is, there is victory.”

“The best among men, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is the very soul of all created beings, is whirling this earth, the vacant space above it and the region of the Devas, as if for amusement and play.”

“That very Lord, casting what appears like a spell over people, and making the Pāṇḍavas an instrument of His mission, desires to reduce your sinful and stupid sons into ashes.”

“Through the power of His Yoga, Bhagavān Keśava constantly moves the wheels of Time, Creation and Ages (Yuga).”

“Take it from me that Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa alone controls in His authority Time, Death and all the animate and inanimate creation.”

“The great Yogi Śrī Kṛṣṇa, while exercising authority over the entire creation, initiates action like a husbandman for the prosperity of the world.”

“Bhagavān Keśava puts people on the wrong scent by the action of His Yogamāyā. Those alone who take refuge in Him are not fascinated and misled by His Māyā.”

Hearing this, Dhṛtarāṣṭra queries Sañjaya—“How do you know Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the mighty Lord of the entire creation and how is it that I do not know Him as such?” Sañjaya says, “O king, one whose knowledge is covered by ignorance, can never recognize Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa. You do not possess that faculty of knowledge; therefore you do not know, but I know it.” Again, in the 70th chapter of the Udyoga-Parva, Dhṛtarāṣṭra speaks to Sañjaya as follows :

“O Sañjaya, I ask you about Śrī Kṛṣṇa; you relate to me the stories of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the lotus-eyed, so that through the knowledge of His Name and greatness I can realize Him, the best among men.” Sañjaya discusses in several verses the greatness and glory of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His Name, but even then Dhṛtarāṣṭra could not fully recognize Śrī Kṛṣṇa. This proves that he alone on whom the grace of God descends can perceive the identity of the Lord.

Every action of the Lord was impregnated with a unique significance. He was possessed of omnipotence, was an ocean of wisdom, and was very clever. Not a single of His acts, not a single of His thoughts proved ineffectual. If any of His plans fell through, it was so because He willed it, and that failure itself is full of deep significance and meaning. When the Lord went to Hastināpura as an envoy of the Pāṇḍavas and His mission of peace fell through, the reason for it was that He had no desire for peace. This is clearly proved by the conversation He had with Draupadī at the time of His starting on His errand of embassy. With many lamentations Draupadī prayed to the Lord (Mahābhārata, Udyoga-Parva, chapter 82) thus—

“O Kṛṣṇa, arisen from the sacrificial altar and daughter of King Drupada, sister of Dhṛṣṭadyumna and a dear friend of Yours, connected by marriage with the noble family of Ājamīḍha and daughter-in-law of the high-souled Pāṇḍu, queen of the five Pāṇḍavas who vie with Indra in majesty and splendour, mother of five valiant sons born of those five heroes, who are as dear to You as Abhimanyu in spiritual relation, with all these and in the very presence of the sons of Pāṇḍu, O Keśava, and although You were alive, I was dragged by the hair into the open court and persecuted.”

“Though the Pāṇḍavas, Pāñcālas and Vṛṣnis were all alive, I was forcibly taken to the court of those sinful

creatures and was made, and actually treated as, a female servant."

"Even observing all the persecution when the Pāṇḍavas remained passionless and motionless, then I meditated and prayed in my mind—"O Govinda, protect me."

"O lotus-eyed, when You negotiate for peace with the enemy, then remember this lock of hair by which I was dragged by Duśsāsana."

"So long as I do not see the black arms of Duśsāsana chopped off his body and rolling in dust, how can I get any peace in my mind?"

Lamenting in these words with a voice choked with extreme grief, the large-eyed Draupadī began to tremble and cry in a loud tone.

Moved to pity by the words of Draupadī, the Lord made the dreadful promise of destroying the Kauravas. He said—

"The Himālayas may shake, the earth may shatter into hundreds of pieces, the heaven may come down with the vault of stars, but my words cannot go in vain."

"O Draupadī, restrain your tears, I hereby promise that you will soon find your husbands in possession of their kingdom and freed of their enemies by the latters' death."

This shows that the Lord was determined that the fight must take place, and His mission to Hastināpura was undertaken only to maintain the best traditions of society and save His dear Pāṇḍavas from the guilt or responsibility of the catastrophe.

Then, in connection with the promise of not taking up arms on behalf of any party and violating it by holding the discus against His dear devotee Bhīṣma, the Lord's own intention was the cause of this breach. A study of this portion of the Bhīṣma-Parva makes it clear that the incident

was deeply significant and was a sport (Līlā) of love, though full of the heroic sentiment. The aged warrior Bhīṣma was a great devotee, who possessed deep reverence for the Lord. It was to enhance the glory of this devotee that the Lord enacted this extraordinary Līlā. In fact, the acts of the Lord are all stainless and divine. It is not an easy thing to realize and appreciate this divine element in His actions.

Who can adequately praise the limitless divine qualities of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa? The sum-total of forbearance, compassion and tranquillity that is observed in this world, and all the splendour, glory, strength and majesty visible in the universe should be known as nothing but a radiation of a portion of the splendour of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The Lord Himself says—

“Whatever there is great, glorious, brilliant and powerful on this earth, know that to be a product of a part of My splendour. Or, O Arjuna, what is the need for you to know all this in detail; remember this much that I exist supporting this entire universe by a portion of Myself.” (Gītā X. 42)

□ □

How to Work for the Sake of God?

Question : How can one perform one's duties cheerfully, knowing such work to be God's work and remembering God through every act and without attachment or hatred for anybody?

Answer : One should cultivate the feeling that all that exists, belongs to God, that it is God Himself who is sporting in the universe, that He is the conjurer who has brought forth this universe as if by a stroke of jugglery, while he is His boy assistant. He should regard everything as God's play, renouncing both attachment and desire for fruit, should work according to Divine injunctions and in a spirit of service to God through impulse and strength derived from Him. Let him repeatedly be stirred with deep emotion to think of the unbounded mercy of God in having associated a humble creature like himself in His Divine sport. Let him be driven into raptures to think of the greatness of God's Love, Grace, Power, Beauty of Form and Mystery in the following way—

(Love)—There is no lover who can compare with God. Love possesses such incalculable value in His eyes that though master of an infinite number of universes, God offers Himself as a slave to His devotees.

(Grace)—How low am I, how base and vile, and yet how unbounded is the Lord's mercy on me that He has associated me in His Divine sport. Redeeming me from sin as well as the fever and fret of the world, He has made me qualified to participate in His game.

(Power)—Who can measure and describe the Lord's

Power? In the twinkling of an eye, He can create and destroy crores of universes.

(Beauty of Form)—All the accumulated beauty of the entire universe cannot compare with the Beauty of even the tiniest hair on the Body of the Lord. He is Bliss incarnate. The very sight of Him fills one with Supreme Joy. He is Consciousness Itself. Just as electricity performs various functions, even so the Divine Energy is doing everything in the universe. The Paramātmā, who is consolidated Knowledge and Bliss, is spreading everywhere, complete by Himself. It is the same eternal Lord, embodied as Knowledge and Bliss, who comes down in our midst and incarnates Himself as Śrī Rāma, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and so on.

(Mystery)—Who can dive into the Lord's mystery? He permeates all, yet none can get hold of Him. His real nature constitutes mystery. When the Lord manifested Himself as Śrī Kṛṣṇa, there were many who could not recognize Him in that form. Some took Him as a mere cowherd boy, while others looked upon Him as the child of Vasudeva. His mystery was revealed only to those great souls who recognized Him as God Himself. No trace of anxiety, affliction or sorrow can exist for the man who has realized the mystery of the Lord. The Lord is present everywhere, this is the mystery that has got to be realized. The great devotee Arjuna knew the Lord's mystery to some extent and took service from Him as his charioteer; but even he was overwhelmed with a mixed feeling of fear and joy when the Lord revealed His Universal Form before his eyes. The Lord then said to him, 'Fear Me not.' So long as Arjuna gave way to fear, he did not realize the whole mystery of the Lord. The true realization was possessed by Prahlāda who approached the Lord, even when the latter appeared in a terrible form (half-lion and half-man) before him, without

any hesitation. He did not feel the slightest fear. He who realizes the mystery of God likewise becomes fearless under all circumstances.

Question : The Jīva (individual soul) has not the capacity to know the mystery of the Lord. He can know it only when the Lord makes it known to him. Prahlāda was able to know the Lord only when the latter made Himself known to him. Through what method can the Lord be made to unfold His secret to us?

Answer : For this one should pray to God. He can make Himself known to us through His Grace. But the general rule is that He makes Himself known only when the devotee is ripe for this knowledge, hence one should have unshakable faith in His Grace. Śrī Bharata, the crown-jewel of devotees, says, in the words of Tulasīdāsa—

“If the Lord reckons my actions, then there is no redemption for me even for crores of cycles. But (I know) the Lord takes no notice of the devotees' weaknesses; for He is a friend of the distressed and possesses a most tender heart. My strength lies in this Faith. Auspicious omens augur that Śrī Rāma will surely deign to meet me.”*

(Rāmacaritamānasa)

He who possesses such unshakable faith is duly taken care of by the Lord. With a sincere heart, therefore, one should pray to God in a pathetic way as follows—“O Lord, I am grossly vile by nature, and am in no way worthy of Thy Grace. You offer Yourself as a slave to those who possess the strength of love like the celebrated milk-maids of Vṛndāvana. O Lord, if I possessed this strength of love, what need was there for me to weep and pray? When I

* जौं करनी समझै प्रभु मोरी । नहिं निस्तार कलप सत कोरी ॥
जन अवगुन प्रभु मान न काऊ । दीनबंधु अति मृदुल सुभाऊ ॥
मोरे जियँ भरोस दृढ़ सोई । मिलिहहि राम सगुन सुभ होई ॥

look to my sins and weaknesses, and lack of strength in me, misgivings and despair take possession of my soul. But, O Lord, Your compassion knows no limits. You are an ocean of mercy, the redeemer of the fallen; give me the strength whereby I may be able to realize Thy mystery."

All work should be regarded as God's work. We are working in conjunction with the Lord, who is carrying on His sport of love in the universe. We should, therefore, make our conduct conform to the will of the Lord. If through attachment or force of habit, we happen to violate His commands on any occasion, we should pray to God that we may not repeat the folly.

We should never consciously do anything undesirable. But suppose we are doing something for the good of another, and if through an evil fate our action results in harm to him, we should not grieve or repent for the result. We should repent only for our own error. Suppose we get an intimation to the effect that a flood is fast approaching and that we should leave our home and remove to some place of safety. But we ignore the intimation and refuse to leave the place, as a result of which all our possessions are washed away. This is a clear case for repentance, because God gave us the warning and we ignored it. But if a flood overtakes us unawares and everything is thereby lost, we need not worry over the matter inasmuch as in this case there was no error on our part. Suppose a certain area is visited by floods and all the seeds of the cultivators are washed away. We supply a fresh stock of seeds to the cultivators by way of relief, but suppose there is a recurrence of floods in that area and the seeds are again washed away. This should not cause any grief to us, nor should we think that inasmuch as the seeds are being repeatedly washed away, it was useless waste of money to supply the cultivators

with more seeds. For us the command of the Lord is that we should continue to supply seeds as long as we can. Our duty, therefore, is to carry out this command. One should not spare anything in doing so. Let the Lord do whatever He chooses to do. The servant on his part should feel delighted in having done His work and stick to his path of duty with a firm will. Left to himself the ailing person does generally take the wrong diet. How can we help it? The good physician will reprove the patient no doubt for his having taken a wrong diet but will not be angry with him. He will be gratified to think that the patient has carried out three out of his five instructions and will try to induce the latter to carry out the other two as well. He will repeatedly try to prevent the patient from taking a wrong diet. But even if his repeated efforts fail to bring the desired result and the patient is not cured, the physician need not be despondent, nor is it necessary for him to feel annoyed. He should leave the result of his action to be shaped according to the will of God. Without fretting or fuming and being unwearied he should continue to participate in the Divine sport according to the will of the Lord.



Glory of the Divine Name and Its Practice

The ‘Nitya-Karma’ that we perform every morning and evening has a most salutary effect on our life and is an exceedingly important item of our daily routine. It should, therefore, be performed with due attention and in right earnest. Generally it is seen that people do not pay much regard to it and do it in a slipshod manner. This is most lamentable and it is due to this scanty regard that we fail to derive full benefit from our daily practice. The time that is devoted to the ‘Nitya-Karma’ i.e., Sandhyā and Gāyatrī, is the most valuable, most sacred and most useful of all the twenty-four hours. Both morning and evening, when the day and night meet, we perform ‘Sandhyopāsanā’ and this in itself is worship of God. Prāṇāyāma or control of breath, meditation, Japa, study of the Gītā, reciting Stotras and offering prayers—all these are comprised in Upāsanā and through this Upāsanā is the worship of God performed.

We do not, as I have just said, pay due attention to our ‘Sandhyopāsanā’ and other ‘Nitya-Karma’ and it is therefore that it has not become the part and parcel of our daily life. We deceive ourselves by going hurriedly through it, by anyhow finishing it; and it is therefore most natural that we fail to find any joy in it; for we are far off from the real Upāsanā. It does not touch our heart in the least and the mind is let loose to have its own way. It is a plain and simple case of self-deception and for a true seeker there can be nothing worse than self-deception; for that is bound to hamper his spiritual progress.

It cannot be too much emphasized that if we perform

our 'Nitya-Karma' with faith and reverence, we shall be instantaneously benefited by it. The most important factor in Upāsanā is love combined with reverence. Done with love is done well. There is an immense joy in the doing itself. Love transforms work into worship; and whatever is done with love leaves an indelible impression on our mind. Worship done in a desultory manner, in a half-hearted way, will bear no fruit even if done for years together; whereas Upāsanā done with reverence and love, even once, will yield speedy results and be a source of untold joy and peace.

The heart must co-operate; this is essential for our Upāsanā. You must be able to put your whole heart into your Sādhanā; only then the Sādhanā is worth the name. Be it Dhyāna (meditation), Japa or Prāṇāyāma (control of breath)—the heart must be there. That is all.

As a spiritual Sādhanā, practice of the Divine Name is at once the easiest and the best; there is nothing higher than this. The more secret the practice, the higher is its effect. It is therefore necessary that Japa of the Divine Name should be performed most secretly, so that others may not know it. Not only that. The fact of practising Japa in secret should not be disclosed to others, as it thereby loses much of its value and efficacy. One should not even throw a hint to show that he performs Japa secretly. He should conceal it and guard it; for, as I have already said, the more secret the Japa the more efficacious it would be. Wonderful indeed is the effect of secret Japa. Virtue and evil both have a peculiar characteristic that the more secretly they are practised the more intense is their effect and consequence. A Sādhanā performed secretly floods the heart of the devotee with love for the Divine and it brings peace and bliss in its train.

It is also essential that the Sādhaka while performing the

Japa should bear in mind the meaning and significance of the Name; for that will add to his joy. Nay, his heart will thereby be filled with the Joy Eternal and he will be carried away, as it were, by the magnetic current of Supreme Bliss. For example, let us take up the following Mantra :

हे राम हे राम राम राम हे हे ।
हे कृष्ण हे कृष्ण कृष्ण कृष्ण हे हे ॥

There are three names in this Mantra—Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Hari. These names denote both the manifest and the unmanifest aspects of the Divinity and; as they are the names of one and the same God, therefore the devotee while repeating this Mantra should meditate on his own 'Iṣṭa-Devatā', whoever He may be. Essentially there is no difference between Rāma, Kṛṣṇa and Hari or Viṣṇu. Lord Viṣṇu incarnated at the dawn of creation, Śrī Rāma in Tretā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa in Dvāpara. These are the Saguṇa and Sākāra—with attributes and manifest forms of the Infinite; and while the Sādhaka is repeating this Mantra, he should devote himself heart and soul to his own Iṣṭa-Deva and should remember Him and meditate on His divine form.

There is still another significance attaching to these names. 'Rāma' means the all-conscious and all-blissful Divinity who permeates the whole world or in whom the Yogīs find joy*. In Kṛṣṇa, the syllable 'Kṛṣ' means existence and 'Na' means joy; thus 'Kṛṣṇa' means everlasting, immortal and eternal Joy.† The word 'Hari' means one who

* रमन्ते योगिनो यस्मिन् नित्यानन्दे चिदात्मनि ।
इति रामपदेनैतत् परं ब्रह्माभिधीयते ॥

(Padmapurāṇa)

† कृषिर्भूवाचकः शब्दो णश्च निर्वृतिवाचकः ।
विष्णुस्तद्वावयोगाच्च कृष्णो भवति सात्वतः ॥

(Mahābhārata, Udyogaparva LXX. 5)

takes away all sins, who burns all the sins of one who recites His Name.*

While performing the Japa, the Sādhaka should dwell on the meaning of these Divine Names, and should believe that the all-pervading Divinity has appeared before him in the form of the Name. This gives ineffable joy and peace of mind. Or else the Sādhaka should keep his mind fixed on the Divine Form of the Lord—His ‘Iṣṭa-Deva’.

The Sādhaka should have absolutely no desire—earthly or heavenly in his mind. When offered a boon, Prahlāda thankfully declined, saying that he who asks for anything in lieu of his Sādhana or Bhakti is verily not a Sādhaka but a businessman, a ‘Vaṇik’. But when the Lord still persisted, Prahlāda said, “I pray You to destroy my desire for asking, if there be any. This is the only boon I ask of You.” The Sādhaka should thus devote himself heart and soul to the Divine Name—remembering the inner significance of the Name and bearing in mind the Divine Form of the Lord, and should have absolutely no desire, no ambition, no motive other than love for the Name Itself. Japa performed in disinterested manner has an immediate effect on the mind and heart of the aspirant. Let the Japa be carried on in all conditions, at all times. Let your heart be surcharged with love of the Name. The very memory of the Beloved is intoxicating. One single name of the Beloved is enough to flood the heart with love. The Form—that most enrapturing, most bewitching Beauty easily seduces the heart and soul of the lover and when He comes in—the light, the love, the fragrance and above all the very ‘Presence’ is simply soul-captivating. The ‘Japa’ carried on with love, faith and

* हरिहरति पापानि दुष्कृतैरपि स्मृतः ।
अनिच्छयापि संस्पृष्टो दहत्येव हि पावकः ॥

reverence has nothing on earth as its equal. It is unparalleled. And the deeper the love, the more silent, the more inward is the Sādhanā.

Three things are thus necessary for the practice of Nāma-Japa—

(1) The practice should be carried on quite secretly.

(2) The significance of the Name should always be borne in mind.

(3) The practice should be absolutely disinterested.

While in meditation, if one can dwell on the glories and mysterious Līlās of the Lord, he will experience an ineffable joy in the Sādhanā and the meditation will become all the more enjoyable on that account. All the divine Līlās of the Lord are supremely blissful and transcendent. If any such Līlā brimming with sweet love descends into the heart of the Sādhaka at the time of meditation, he will not be in the least inclined to give up the meditation; for he will be drenched with love through every pore of his being—his heart, mind and soul will float as it were on the unfathomable ocean of joy, peace and bliss. It is true meditation. It is easy to sit for meditation; but it is difficult to leave it when one is really deep down in Dhyāna. For real meditation has a magical effect on the heart and mind of the aspirant and he is completely overpowered thereby. The meditation will be real as you realize the quality, glory and mystery of God.

To fathom the ocean of the virtues of the Lord is impossible; it is He from whom all divine virtues emanate. How can one sing the glories of the Divine? He is all love, the very embodiment of love. Love is His very nature. He is all mercy, the very embodiment of mercy—Mercy is His very nature. All the supreme divine virtues have their fullest manifestation in the Lord and He is the very repository of them all. So is His power. Whatever power we see anywhere

in this world, it is His. The burning capacity in fire, the light in the sun, the nectar-like coolness in the moon—all these, even when taken together, hardly represent a fragment of the Divine Power.

The Lord says in the *Gītā*, “Whatever you find endowed with glory, lustre and power, know that to be the manifestation of a ray of My light.”*

The universe has its origin in the Divine will and ceases to exist in the absence of that will. Even the vilest sinner who has been sinning on for lives together will be absolved of his sins by a single ray of the Divine Mercy; nay, the whole world can be redeemed in a single moment if God so wills it. Not only this, a mere hint from God is enough to bring salvation to the entire universe. To speak nothing of His ‘Darśana’ or meditation, one can become pure and holy in a moment by simply remembering Him. Not only this, the scriptures declare and the saints affirm by their experience that mere repetition of the Divine Name is potent enough to deliver mankind. Such is the power of the Divine Grace.

A question naturally arises here; so many persons have taken to the Divine Name today, how is it then that they do not attain liberation? Do the scriptures or the saints tell a lie? The answer is most simple and is not far to seek. The fact of the matter is that through the Divine Name we are not getting liberation or Mukti mostly because we do not take to It with faith, sincerity and devotion. We do it merely as a matter of routine, to complete the prescribed number or any how to while away the time. How, then, can we blame the scriptures and saints? Practice of the Divine Name should be carried

* यद्द्विभूतिमत्सत्त्वं श्रीमद्भूर्जितमेव वा ।
तत्तदेवावगच्छ त्वं मम तेजोऽशसम्भवम् ॥

on with love, reverence and faith and in an absolutely disinterested manner. Then only it can be fruitful.

But the scriptures go so far as to say that mere repetition of the Name is enough and that a single utterance of the Divine Name burns all the accumulated sins of the Sādhaka just as a single spark of fire burns a huge pile of wood. The glory of the Divine Name cannot be sung adequately. Even ordinary 'Japa' brings everlasting peace and bliss. How is it, then, that we do not derive full benefit from Nāma-Japa?

Admittedly, the fault is ours. We have no faith in such wonderful efficacy of the Name. The Name has not entered into our heart, It has not touched the Soul. Even though with the Name, we are not in the Name, the Name is not in us. Everything goes on as if mechanically, superficially, externally; and the internal remains untouched, undrenched, unattuned. The glory of the Divine Name, of which the scriptures have spoken so much, is nothing but false praise, it is not corroborated by experience—such is our apprehension, such is the doubt lurking in the heart of our hearts and eating into the very vitals of our life. That is why we do not derive full benefit from the Divine Name. Want of faith is the root cause of the trouble. Those who have put faith in the supreme efficacy of the Name have realized it in their life. The moment one comes in touch with the Name, his whole being is inundated with ineffable love for the Divine and instantaneously he feels peace and bliss in his heart.

As I have said above, the very remembrance of the Divine Name burns all our sins and brings forth all good results. In Name is centred all the Love of God and if one attunes his heart with the Name, he will definitely find that the Divine Mercy is raining on him in torrents. When the inner eye opens, one is at a loss to understand his past indifference towards the Name and Its charm.

There is a parable. Once a Sādhu came to a householder and begged for food calling ‘Nārāyaṇa-Hari’—as is the custom among Sādhus. The householder had been reduced to indescribable penury, and had nothing left in his house to give to the Sādhu. He was willing to give something, but there was no help. His condition was really pitiable and helpless. The Sādhu said that there is none so fortunate as you are. He knew that the indigence of the man lay in his ignorance and taking pity on him, the Sādhu pointed out to him that the piece of stone with which he pounded his chutney was verily the Philosopher's Stone, the very touch of which could transform all iron into gold. The Sādhu asked the householder to fetch all iron utensils that he had in his possession and by bringing them into contact with the ‘Stone’ he transformed all of them into gold ones. The poor man was now the wealthiest person in a moment, and he could flood the whole world with wealth.

The same sort of ignorance has clouded our intellect, and we are as it were pounding chutney with the Philosopher's Stone. When the inner eye opens, we come to have a true Knowledge of the real worth of the precious stone and having known it, we cannot live for a moment without it. This most neglected, most insignificant stone, which had been lying in our house for years, is now recognized to be the Philosopher's Stone and we lament our foolish indifference and ignorance about it. The mystery is revealed to us in no time: so mysterious is His benign grace. The most precious thing whereby our poverty turns into power in a moment, does not come from without. It is already with us, within us. Mere ignorance stands in the way. The moment the veil of ignorance is lifted we come face to face with the Lord, in whom we really live, move and have our being.

The mystery is mysterious no doubt, but it unravels

itself before us in a moment; and no sooner is the mystery unravelled—than we are completely metamorphosed, and come face to face with the Truth Eternal. The very touch of this Truth makes man divine. And then what is the Truth and how does it work miracle? The Divine Name is that Truth and It works wonders. Its very remembrance dries the ocean of mundane existence, the shackles of birth and death break off and one gets attuned heart and soul with the Divine Life, Divine Light and Divine Love. How can one describe the Joy of meeting the Beloved who is dearer than life, dearer than anything on earth or in heaven. Who can describe that joy, that love, that peace, that bliss which one enjoys by coming in touch with his Beloved, by embracing Him?

Such is the joy of the Nāma-Japa practised with love. Love unexpressed is sacred and divine and it shines like a beautiful gem in the innermost depths of the devotee's heart. The Name, the Divine Name practised secretly and with love, with no motive whatsoever is verily that gem and a Sādhaka, once he has got 'It', has nothing more to aspire after. Even a moment thus spent in Nāma-Japa with love is of supreme good to the seeker.



Supreme Peace Through Knowledge of God

God is the soul of all beings. He is all-pervading, the knower of every heart; therefore service to all creatures is the same as service to God. He who understands this, having known the truth about God, may realize God. It should, however, be borne in mind that he who knows God in this manner, when he serves any person worthy of service, or worships a person worthy of worship, regards such service and worship as having been rendered to God Himself and derives as much joy and peace from the same as one may derive from the service and worship of God. Like king Rantideva, he perfectly understands that manifesting Himself in different forms, it is God Himself who accepts the charity, sacrifice, service, and worship offered to Him with love by His dear devotee.

King Rantideva was the grandson of king Nara and son of king Sankṛti. His glory has spread over both the regions of heaven and earth. On one occasion having given away all possessions in charity the king and his family, unable to procure food for want of money, were reduced to mere skeletons through starvation. For forty-eight days at a stretch they could find no water to drink, much less any food. The whole royal family went on starving. The skeleton of the virtuous king began to tremble oppressed by hunger and thirst. On the forty-ninth day he obtained some quantity of rice boiled in milk mixed with clarified butter, a sweetmeat prepared of flour, clarified butter and sugar and water to

drink. But when the king and his family were about to partake of this food, a Brāhmaṇa guest appeared before him. The king who saw God in every being, welcomed the Brāhmaṇa with due respect and reverence and entertained him with food. After taking his meal the Brāhmaṇa went away. The king, then, thought of dividing the balance of food into equal share among all members of the family and partaking of the same, when another guest, who was Śūdra by caste, appeared on the scene. Remembering Śrī Hari, the king fed this guest also with a part of the balance of food. On the departure of the Śūdra guest, a third guest appeared accompanied by a dog and said, "O king, I and my dog are hungry. Please give us food." The king welcomed him as well, and fed him and his dog with due respect with what food was left over. Now, he had in stock only as much water as could remove the thirst of a single person. When the king was about to drink it, a Cāṇḍāla appeared on the scene piteously crying, "O great king, I am terribly exhausted, please give me a little water to drink, fallen as I am." Hearing his plaintive appeal and finding him really exhausted, the king was overtaken with compassion, and though himself about to die of thirst, he gave away the water to the new comer. In order to test the virtue of the king, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Mahādeva, these three gods came before king Rantideva, assuming through illusion the forms of Brāhmaṇa and others. Observing the fortitude and generosity of the king they were all extremely pleased and assuming their own forms appeared before the king. King Rantideva bowed before those three forms, which were, in fact, Gods' own forms in different aspects. And though they were so greatly pleased, the king did not seek any boon from them. Renouncing attachment and desire, he fixed his mind only on Vāsudeva. Owing to his absorption in God, Māyā consisting of the

three Guṇas (Sattva, Raja and Tama) disappeared from his presence like a dream. Through association with Rantideva, the members of his family became devotees of Nārāyaṇa and attained the supreme state realized by Yogīs.

God is almighty, omniscient and far superior to both the perishable (bodies) and the imperishable (Jīvātmā). He is the supreme Lord of all lords of creation, and the Master of infinite number of universes. There is none greater than He in all the world. When people come to know Him as such, they worship Him alone and no other, for the Lord Himself says—

यो मामेवमसमूढो जानाति पुरुषोत्तमम् ।
स सर्वविद्वज्ञति मां सर्वभावेन भारत ॥

(Gītā XV. 19)

“O Arjuna, the undeluded person who knows Me as the Supreme Being knows everything, and worships Me with all his being.”

The fact is well-known in the world that man accepts whatever he considers to be the best. Suppose a king being pleased with the service of a poor but very devoted servant, who always makes it a point to adjust himself to the liking of his Master, decides to make a gift. He has heaps of coal, gravel, stone etc., on side, on another there are heaps of copper, iron, brass and other metals; at one place there was a heap of silver and silver coins, and at another gold and gold coins and there was one particular place where diamonds, emeralds, sapphires, rubies and other precious stones were stored. Now, addressing the servant, the king said that from morning till evening he could carry away as much of anything he liked among those things. Now, the reader may himself imagine, will any man possessing his senses waste a single moment in carrying loads of gravel and stones,

leaving the precious gems alone? Never. Then, why should the devotee, who has knowledge of God's truth, mystery, glory and virtues, leave the precious gems in the form of Bhajana and meditation and waste a single moment of his life in accumulating worldly possessions in the form of gravel and stones. If he devotes any part of his valuable time in the enjoyment of the transient things of the world, leaving God alone, the repository of Bliss, it should be a clear indication of the fact that he has not understood the great glory and mystery of almighty God, the Supreme Lord of all.

The friend of the poor, the redeemer of the fallen, and omniscient God is an ocean of all virtues. He is the very image of Grace and Love. He who knows the truth about these virtues of God gets rid of all fear and comes to possess unlimited joy and peace. Now, the question may be raised, if God is an image of Grace and Love, His infinite grace should fall on all; if so, why do we fail to get happiness and peace? The answer to this is, the Lord is no doubt the very ocean of Grace, and this Grace falls on all, but the fact is we have no faith in it ! The Lord's Grace on all beings is so great that it transcends our imagination. His compassion for Jīvas is much greater than all the tenderness we may imagine in the world, but unaware of its truth and glory we do not believe in it, that is why we remain deprived of its eternal and infinite fruit, viz., attainment of happiness and peace. Though divine Grace falls on all Jīvas in a general way, man being specially qualified for liberation from bondage is a special object of Grace. And among men, again, he who knows the secret and glory of Grace possesses a still better qualification. For instance, the sun's rays fall on every object, but they are reflected better in the glass and still better in the sun-stone, which acquires power

from the sun to burn an object like a piece of cloth. Thus, though the Lord's Grace falls equally on all Jīvas, the person who particularly knows the secret and glory of that Grace succeeds with its help in reducing all sins and troubles to ashes. The more a man realizes the truth and glory of divine Grace, the more he gets rid of sorrow, vice and sin with the result that becoming fearless and free of care he attains supreme peace and supreme bliss.

Suppose there was a virtuous and wise king, who had a natural feeling of compassion for his subjects, but all people were unaware of this. Through his ministers and secret-service-men he used to keep himself in touch with his helpless and poor subjects and send them aid according to the requirement of each particular case. In his capital there was a boy of the Kṣatriya caste, who was extremely polite by nature, possessed of virtuous conduct, wise and clever and had reverence for the king. His parents died leaving him an orphan child. The boy had heard from his parents and had gained the knowledge from them that the king of the state was an extremely kind-hearted king and a protector of the poor. Therefore, when his parents died he was not overtaken by as much anxiety as he ought to have been under the circumstance. He had a conviction that the compassionate king will of his own accord make some arrangement for his maintenance. The boy was reading in a school. When his fellow-students found that though an orphan, he was without any anxiety, they questioned, "Your parents are dead, who will now look after you?" The boy replied, "Our king is a compassionate king, he will himself make all the necessary arrangements for me." The secret-service-men reported this talk to the king. Thereupon, the king asked his ministers to make an enquiry. The ministers unanimously reported: "The boy is exceptionally beautiful,

polite, virtuous, intelligent and devoted to the king. His parents are dead, therefore he is now wholly helpless. He has none to look after him except His Majesty." The king queried, "What arrangements should be made for him?" The ministers replied, "That depends on His Majesty's wish." The king passed an order that the expenses of the boy's maintenance and education should be borne by the state and a house was to be erected for him at state expense. The king's generosity delighted the ministers. When the report of the royal favour was brought to the boy, his joy knew no bounds. His devotion for the king increased all the more, and together with it his faith grew double or even fourfold.

One day when the boy was at school, a fellow-student of his, who had love for him, asked him in a spirit of complaint: "Brother, what has been your guilt that the sepoys of the king are demolishing your cottage? Delighted at the question, the boy replied, "O brother, the king is extremely kind to me. It is possible my cottage is being demolished with a view to erect a good residence for me." The secret-service-men carried this reply also to the king. The king's love for the boy now grew all the more. One day summoning all his ministers, the king said, "You all know that I am getting old. I have no issue. Whom shall I install as the Crown Prince?" The ministers replied, "Whoever is considered fit for the honour may be installed by His Majesty." The king said, "In my opinion, the orphan Kṣatriya boy, whom you have always praised before me, is the fittest person to hold this position. Please tell me whether you approve of the proposal." All the ministers unanimously exclaimed, "Yes Lord, it is an excellent proposal. From every point of view, he is qualified for the position. We also considered him to be best suited for this high honour." On

the advice of his ministers, the king finally decided to make the boy his successor to the throne. This report spread among the high dignitaries of the state. One day some high officers of the state came to see the boy at his residence. The boy welcomed them all with proper courtesy and respect. The officers said, "His Majesty the king looks upon you with very great favour." The boy replied, "I know it well that I am the recipient of very great favour from His Majesty; that is why he has arranged for my food, clothes, education and has built this house for me." The officers again said, "That is not all, the king is extremely pleased with you, you cannot imagine the extent of his pleasure on you." Thereupon, the boy asked, "Has His majesty decided to bear also the expenses of my marriage?" The officers replied, "That is a small matter, the king looks upon you with exceptionally great favour." The boy, again asked, "Does His Majesty desire to make a gift of some villages to me?" The officers replied, "This is also nothing." The boy asked, "Has the king decided to give me a big jagir of, say ten to twenty villages?" The officers replied, "The king's favour on you far surpasses even that." The boy said, "I cannot imagine anything surpassing this favour, be kind enough to tell me what it is?" The officers replied, "What shall we say? We always solicit your kind favour on us." The boy said, "Please do not say so. I am a humble servant of you all; it is because of your kind favour that I have earned the favour of His Majesty, the king. Please tell me something special about the generosity of our great king." The officers replied, "We have already said that we solicit your kind favour. Have you not understood the implication of what we said?" The boy said, "Kindly tell me plainly what you intend to say?"

How was it possible for that poor boy to imagine that

the king had decided to make him the successor to the throne and install him as the Crown Prince? The officers exclaimed, "His Majesty has selected you as our Crown Prince." Full of wonder, the boy ejaculated, "Me, as Crown Prince!" The officers replied, "Yes Sir. His Majesty has been pleased to select you as the successor to the throne."

The boy's joy now knew no limits. He kept mute through sheer intensity of emotion.

This is only an illustration. In order to understand the implication of the story, the underlying parallelism should be grasped. The king in the story is God Himself, the Sādhaka is the orphan Kṣatriya boy, devotion to God is the spirit of loyalty to the king, arrangement for the wherewithal of the Sādhaka is the same as arrangement for the boy's food, clothing, residence, etc. God-realized souls are ministers of the state. Aspirants to salvation possessed of the divine qualities are the high dignitaries. The position of a Kāraka Puruṣa, attained by the highest of devotees, is the position of the Crown Prince.

Thus the Sādhaka, who realizing the infinite grace of God, our supreme Father, feels delighted with all his dispensations, at every step, becomes qualified to attain the imperishable state of the Crown Prince of God.

Therefore, we should make every attempt to know God, who is all-pervading, knower of every heart, almighty, supremely compassionate and everybody's friend together with His form, glory and virtues, for the realization of supreme peace and supreme bliss. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the Gītā—

भोक्तारं यज्ञतपसां सर्वलोकमहेश्वरम् ।
सुखं सर्वभूतानां ज्ञात्वा मां शान्तिमृच्छति ॥

(V. 29)

"Having known Me as the enjoyer of sacrifices and

austerities, the great Lord of all the worlds, and as the friend of all beings, My devotee attains peace."

Question : What do the words 'Yajña' (sacrifice) and 'Tapas' (austerity) convey? How does the Lord enjoy the fruit of both? And how does man attain peace by knowing Him to be the enjoyer of both?

Answer : Practice of virtues (known as Yamas and Niyamas, such as harmlessness, veracity, etc., service and adoration of gods, the Brāhmaṇas, and elders such as the father and mother; serving the humble and poor, afflicted and oppressed with regard and love and suitable measures adopted for relieving their distress; and all virtuous acts such as the performance of sacrifices and the practice of charity etc.,—all these should be taken as included under 'Yajña' and 'Tapas'. The Lord is the soul of all (Gītā X.20); therefore, it is He who accepts the service and adoration of all, appearing in the form of gods, the Brāhmaṇas, the poor and the afflicted. In reality, therefore, it is He who enjoys the fruit of all sacrifices and austerities (Gītā IX. 24). It is due to their ignorance of divine essence and glory of the Lord that people serve and adore gods and men and regard them as enjoyers of the fruit of service and sacrifices etc., that is why they are rewarded with a fruit which is finite and perishable in character (Gītā VII.23), and are unable to attain real peace. He, however, who has realized the divine essence and glory of the Lord has his eyes directed towards Him, who regards all as their very soul. Thus recognizing every living being as a manifestation of the Lord, he feels, while serving the gods and the Brāhmaṇas, the poor and the afflicted, that he is serving the all-pervading Divine, the highest object of his adoration and love, in all those forms. One finds excessive joy and unique satisfaction in serving him who is held in some esteem by him, for whom he has

the least reverence or devotion, or for whom he has any amount of true and sincere love. Does a devoted son ever feel wearied in serving his father, an affectionate mother in fostering her child, and a loving wife in attending on her husband? Does a true disciple or follower ever shirk on any account the service of his revered preceptor or guide? One feels ever-increasing zeal in serving the object of one's esteem, admiration or love; any amount of service that he is able to render to the latter will appear inadequate to him. He will never feel that he is obliging the man or woman he is serving. Far from priding himself on this service he deems it a privilege conferred on him; and the greater the amount of service he is able to render the more unassuming and unpretentious he becomes. Instead of expecting an acknowledgement for the services rendered by him, he would feel apprehensive every moment lest he might be deprived of the privilege he was enjoying. He undertakes such service because he derives unique satisfaction therefrom. But such satisfaction does not deter him from the service, since his mind is constantly brimming with joy; and instead of feeling satiated with this joy he would be inclined to render more and more service. When the service rendered to one who is an object of worldly esteem, admiration and love is so sincere, so whole-hearted and so gratifying who can tell how much and what transcendent joy, how much and what unique and divine satisfaction will a devotee enjoy—a devotee who recognizes in every form his most beloved and omnipotent Lord, the object of highest adoration for the world, the Supreme Deity, the eternal abode of the highest esteem and inconceivable glory—when he worships Him steeping his pure instinct of service in the sacred and nectarean stream of genuine and sincere faith and intense love constantly flowing towards Him! They alone can

realize it, on whom this privilege is conferred by divine grace.

Question : What do you mean by recognizing the Lord as the supreme ruler of all the worlds, and how does one who recognizes this fact attain peace?

Answer : The Lord is the Master and supreme ruler of all the guardians of the world such as Indra (the god of rain), Varuṇa (the custodian of water), Kubera (the god of riches), Yama (the god of death), etc., as well as of the several Cosmic Rulers presiding over the different universes, viz., Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. That is why the Śruti calls Him the supreme Overlord of all the Cosmic Rulers.* Through His indescribable potency of Māyā the Lord sportfully evolves, sustains and dissolves the countless millions of universes and duly controls them all and yet transcends them. To recognize the Lord as the omnipotent controller and supervisor of all and the Ruler of all cosmic rulers is to recognize Him as the supreme Ruler of all the worlds. A devotee with this cognition, being cognizant of the surpassing glory and mystery of the Lord cannot forget Him even for a moment. Freed from all anxiety and fear he keeps himself exclusively engaged in His thoughts. Internal foes such as lust and anger, which disturb one's peace of mind, do not even approach him. There is no one greater than the Lord in his eyes. He, therefore, devotes himself to His remembrance and is always and incessantly merged in contemplation of the Lord, the unfathomable and infinite ocean of supreme peace and bliss.

Question : How is the Lord the selfless and kind friend of all creatures and how does one who knows Him as such attains peace?

Answer : There is nothing whatsoever in the entire

* Vide Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad VI. 7.

universe which is not possessed by the Lord and in respect of which He may have the least selfish concern with anyone. He has all His desires fulfilled in everyway (Gītā III. 22). Nevertheless, being all-compassionate, He naturally showers His grace on all and caters for the good of all: nay, descending time and again He performs multifarious deeds of a wonderful nature, singing which alone people cross the ocean of mundane existence. Every single act of His is full of beneficence to the world. He blesses even those who are slain or punished by Him; no dispensation of His is devoid of mercy and love. In this way the Lord is the selfless and kind friend of all creatures. People do not realize this secret; it is therefore that they feel happy or grieve over incidents which are welcome or otherwise in the worldly sense, and are unable to attain peace. He who realizes and comes to believe that the Lord is his disinterested friend and that whatever He does, He does for his good, takes every occurrence to be an auspicious dispensation of the all-merciful Lord, full of love and compassion, and remains cheerful under all circumstances. He, therefore, is able to attain lasting peace. There is no longer any cause for his tranquillity being disturbed in anyway. Even in this world if a ruler or an officer of high rank and authority cultivates friendly relations with an ordinary man and if the latter comes to know that the ruler or officer in question is his genuine well-wisher and is prepared to extend his help and protection to him—even though such rulers and officers are not altogether unselfish, and are neither omnipotent nor supreme in authority—the man who is thus befriended considers himself very fortunate and freed from all anxiety and fear is transported with joy. What transcendent joy and unique satisfaction will be ours, if God Himself, who is all-powerful and all-seeing, the witness and inner controller of all, the supreme Ruler of all the worlds, an infinite ocean

of countless inconceivable virtues and an embodiment of supreme love, proclaims Himself to be our disinterested friend and if we repose faith in His words and recognize Him as such, is difficult for us to guess!

Question : Is it he alone who knows the Lord to be endowed with all the three attributes, viz., as the enjoyer of the fruit of all sacrifices and austerities, as the supreme Lord of all the worlds, and as the selfless friend of all living beings, that attains peace, or even he who recognizes Him to be endowed with any of the above three attributes?

Answer : To say nothing of those who recognize the Lord to be endowed with all the three attributes, even he who recognizes Him to be endowed with any of the three attributes attains peace. For he who fully realizes the significance of any of these attributes cannot help remembering Him with single-minded devotion. As a result of God-remembrance the Divine Grace begins to shower on him and through that grace he speedily realizes the truth, essence, glory and virtues of the Lord and attains perfect peace. Ah! How much joy and what satisfaction one will derive when he will realize that the Lord Himself, who is adored by all gods and great sages, who is the sole enjoyer of the fruit of all sacrifices and austerities, and is the supreme Lord of all universes and their lords, is his dearest friend ! He will find no comparison between himself, the meanest and most insignificant creature, and the Lord, who is the supreme Ruler, eternally shining in His infinite and inconceivable glory, and would regard himself to be the most fortunate creature on earth. And with what unique gratitude, with what an outburst of divine feeling and with what an overflow of joy he would consign himself forever to the sacred feet of the Lord !

Question : What is the means of realizing that the Lord

is the enjoyer of the fruit of all sacrifices and austerities, the supreme Lord of all the three worlds and the greatest friend of all creatures? Through what discipline can one realize the truth, essence, glory and virtues of the Lord and develop exclusive devotion to Him?

Answer : By associating with exalted souls with reverence and love, hearing and contemplating on the meaning of the sacred scriptures and by surrendering oneself to the Lord and praying to Him with a longing heart one can through His grace realize His glory and virtues and develop exclusive devotion to him.

Question : To which aspect of His does the Lord refer by the word 'माम्' (Me) in the verse quoted above?

Answer : The word 'माम्' in the above verse refers to the integral Divine, who is both Saguna and Nirguna, both manifest and unmanifest, with form and without form; who is all-formed, all-powerful and all-pervading; the supreme Reality, the Oversoul, the substratum of all and the supreme Ruler of all the worlds; who though unborn, imperishable and the supreme Lord of all beings descends on this earth from time to time through His Yogamāyā with a view to carrying on His pastimes by taking hold of His Prakṛti, and who manifesting Himself as Śrī Kṛṣṇa delivered His divine discourse to Arjuna.

The qualifying phrase 'भोक्तारं यज्ञतपसाम्' (the enjoyer of the fruit of sacrifices and austerities), signifying as it does the fact of God being the Universal Soul, refers to His all-pervading, omniscient and all-controlling aspect. The epithet 'सर्वलोकमहेश्वरम्' (the supreme Ruler of all the worlds) signifies the fact of God being the universal Lord and refers to His omnipotence, suzerainty and infinite glory; and the last attribute 'सुहृदं सर्वभूतानाम्' (the friend of all creatures) signifying the fact of God being the supreme and disinterested well-

wisher of all creatures, refers to His excellent virtues such as unbounded and infinite mercy, love etc.

Surrendering oneself to such an all-merciful Lord, one should pray to Him for a right knowledge of His virtues, glory and mystery as well as for His realization as below—

“Lord ! You are an ocean of mercy, and the Ruler and inner controller of all, omnipotent as well as omniscient; the entire universe can be redeemed in a moment through an iota of your grace, to say nothing of insignificant creatures like ourselves. We, therefore, offer our prostrations to You and humbly pray that You may be pleased to cast a merciful look at us, so that we may know You in reality. Although Your unbounded mercy extends on all, yet being ignorant of its secret we remain deprived of the same. Be pleased, therefore, to vouchsafe to us a knowledge of its mystery. Had you been an ocean of mercy alone and had no access to the innermost recesses of our heart, You would not have been able to realize our internal agony; but being the inner controller enshrined in the hearts of all, You are also aware of the wretched condition to which we have been reduced. And had You not been the universal Lord and all-powerful too, besides being an ocean of mercy and all-witnessing, we would not have troubled You with a prayer for our salvation. But since You are the supreme Ruler of all the worlds and all-powerful, it is something most ordinary for You to redeem insignificant creatures like ourselves from the ocean of mundane existence.”

“Our only prayer to You is that we may have exclusive attachment to You and our mind may remain engrossed in constant remembrance of You, and that we may never be separated from You. You are so benevolent by nature that You not only save Your devotees but redeem even the fallen and the ignorant. Your epithets such as ‘sanctifier of

the fallen' (पतितपाबन) and 'saviour of sinners' (पातकितारण) etc., are too well-known; therefore it is Your paramount duty to redeem ignorant and fallen souls like us, devoid of knowledge, devotion and right conduct."

By praying to the Lord in the above strain in solitude and in any language whatsoever, with a sincere heart and in a piteous voice choked with emotion, one can realize God along with His virtues, glory and essence through His grace and attain supreme and lasting peace.



The Purest Form of Devotion in the Bhāgavata

The Bhāgavata is an uncommon, wonderful book of scripture. It contains detailed and elaborate descriptions of Varṇāśrama Dharma, Mānava Dharma (common human Dharma), Karmayoga, Aṣṭāṅgayoga (Yoga and its eight limbs), Jñānayoga, Bhaktiyoga and every other means of God-realization. But a careful examination will make it clear that Bhakti or devotion to God is its main theme of discussion. Both the forms of Bhakti, viz., Bhakti as means and Bhakti as the end in itself, are described in it. The spirit of devotion to God permeates the book throughout as warp and woof—in its beginning, middle as well as in its end. In the very first Skandha, it is stated—

स वै पुंसां परो धर्मो यतो भक्तिरधोक्षजे ।
अहैतुक्यप्रतिहता यद्याऽत्मा सम्प्रसीदति ॥

(1. 2. 6)

“Man’s highest or supreme Dharma is that by which devotion to Śrī Hari (God) is developed, a devotion which is disinterested in character and unobstructed in its course. Through devotion alone realizing God, the embodiment of Bliss, the heart finds peace and contentment.”

Similarly, at the end of the twelfth Skandha, it is said—

भवे भवे यथा भक्तिः पादयोस्तव जायते ।
तथा कुरुष्व देवेश नाथस्त्वं नो यतः प्रभो ॥
नामसङ्कीर्तनं यस्य सर्वपापप्रणाशनम् ।
प्रणामो दुःखशमनस्तं नमामि हरिं परम् ॥

“O God of gods, O Lord, You are our Master. Please deign to show us this favour that we may maintain devotion to Your lotus-feet in every life. He whose very Name when chanted, destroys all sins, and a bow to whom removes all sorrows, I offer my obeisance to that supreme Lord, Śrī Hari !”

While describing the glory of devotion to Uddhava, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself went so far as to say—

न साध्यति मां योगो न सांख्यं धर्म उद्धव ।
 न स्वाध्यायस्तपस्त्यागो यथा भक्तिर्मोर्जिता ॥
 भक्त्याहमेकया ग्राह्यः श्रद्धयाऽऽत्मा प्रियः सताम् ।
 भक्तिः पुनाति मन्निष्ठा शवपाकानपि सम्भवात् ॥
 धर्मः सत्यदयोपेतो विद्या वा तपसान्विता ।
 मद्भक्त्यापेतमात्मानं न सम्यक् प्रपुनाति हि ॥
 कथं विना रोमहर्ष द्रवता चेतसा विना ।
 विनाऽनन्दाश्रुकलया शुद्धयेद् भक्त्या विनाऽशयः ॥
 वाग् गद्गदा द्रवते यस्य चित्तं रुदत्यभीक्षणं हसति क्वचिच्च ।
 विलम्ज उद्गायति नृत्यते च मद्भक्तियुक्तो भुवनं पुनाति ॥
 यथाग्निना हेम मलं जहाति धातं पुनः स्वं भजते च रूपम् ।
 आत्मा च कर्मानुशयं विधूय मद्भक्तियोगेन भजत्यथो माम् ॥

(XI. xiv. 20—25)

“Neither Yoga, nor knowledge, nor performance of righteous duties, nor study of Vedas, nor austerities, nor charities propitiate Me so well as does well-developed and unswerving devotion to Me. I am the beloved Ātmā of saints, and I am realized only through the practice of devotion with faith. What to speak of others, devotion to Me purifies even Cāṇḍālas, who eat dog’s flesh. If a man is possessed of Dharma combined with Truth and mercy, and of Knowledge with austerities, his heart can not be entirely purified, if he is destitute of devotion to Me. How

can one's mind get purified so long as one's hair does not stand on end, the heart does not melt and tears of joy do not flow like a stream in flood through excess of Love for Me. The devotee whose voice gets choked through intensity of devotion, whose heart has melted, who now weeps, now laughs, and starts singing loudly without any ceremony and dances of his own accord, is not only pure himself but purifies the three worlds. Just as gold dissolved in fire gives up its dross and attains its pure character, even so the soul by means of devotion to Me gets freed from the desires of Karma and attains Me."

By means of devotion, God becomes subservient to the devotee. The Lord says—

अहं भक्तपराधीनो ह्यस्वतन्त्र इव द्विज।
 साधुभिर्ग्रस्तहृदयो भक्तैर्भक्तजनप्रियः ॥
 नाहमात्मानमाशासे मद्भक्तैः साधुभिर्विना ।
 श्रियं चात्यन्तिकीं ब्रह्मन् येषां गतिरहं परा ॥
 ये दारागारपुत्राप्तान् प्राणान् वित्तमिमं परम् ।
 हित्वा मां शरणं याताः कथं तांस्त्यक्लुमुत्सहे ॥
 मयि निर्बद्धहृदयाः साधवः समदर्शनाः ।
 वशीकुर्वन्ति मां भक्त्या सत्ित्रयः सत्पतिं यथा ॥
 साधवो हृदयं मह्यं साधूनां हृदयं त्वहम् ।
 मदन्यत् ते न जानन्ति नाहं तेभ्यो मनागपि ॥

(IX. iv. 63—66,68)

"I am completely in the hands of My devotees. Indeed, I am like one who has no freedom. My heart is in possession of My saintly devotees. I am ever their beloved. O sage, I am the sole refuge of My devotees; they have no other support in life. Therefore, leaving aside these saintly votaries, I have no liking either for Myself or even for My better half, the imperishable Śrī Lakṣmī. How can I neglect these devotees

of Mine, who have wholly surrendered themselves to Me, giving up wife, children, home, relations, life, wealth, this world and the next ? Just as a devoted wife wins over the husband by her devotion, even so these saintly people of equal vision, who have out of love surrendered their heart to Me, win Me over by their devotion. What more shall I say, these Love-intoxicated saints are My heart, and I am their heart. They do not know anything other than Me, nor do I know anything at all other than them.”

At one place, the Lord went to the extent of saying—

अनुव्रजाम्यहं नित्यं पूयेयेत्यङ्गिरेणुभिः ॥

(XI. xiv. 16)

“I follow the foot-steps of those devotees in order to purify Myself with the dust of their feet.”

Indeed, such is the glory of devotion. It is such an incomparable thing that he who possesses it gains whatever he seeks. In the *Gītā*, the Lord said:—

भक्त्या त्वनन्यया शक्य अहमेवंविधोऽर्जुन ।
ज्ञातुं द्रष्टुं च तत्त्वेन प्रवेष्टुं च परन्तप ॥

(XI. 54)

“But O valiant Arjuna, through single-minded devotion, I can be seen in this Form, known in essence, and even entered into, i.e., realized in identity.”

This is verily the character of devotion in the form of Divine Love. The *Bhāgavata* contains an exceptionally beautiful description of this Divine Love as well as of secondary devotion by means of which the former is realized.

The tenth Skandha of the *Bhāgavata* is full of the sentiments of devotion. Containing as it does extremely sweet descriptions of the various sports of the Lord, it captivates the heart when studied or heard. In this tenth Skandha itself certain sports of the Lord have been described,

which when read by ignorant folk make them bold enough not to spare even God Himself as an object of criticism. They say, every action of God is an ideal action. How do questions of theft, deceit, lust and dalliance etc., arise with reference to Him? But, really speaking, there is no point in this criticism. Evils like falsity and deceit, theft and adultery etc., cannot remain even in such ordinary human beings, who begin to practise remembrance of God with an exclusive heart. How is it possible, then, to imagine the existence of such evils in God Himself? The very object of God's descent on earth was to protect the virtuous, chastize the wicked and establish Dharma. How could He indulge in any act which would encourage the wicked, instead of the virtuous, and tear up Dharma by the roots? The Lord declared Himself through His own sacred lips—

यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेवेतरो जनः ।
 स यत्प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते ॥
 न मे पार्थस्ति कर्तव्यं त्रिषु लोकेषु किञ्चन ।
 नानवाप्तमवाप्तव्यं वर्त एव च कर्मणि ॥
 यदि ह्यहं न वर्तेयं जातु कर्मण्यतन्द्रितः ।
 मम वर्तमानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः ॥
 उत्सीदेयुरिमे लोका न कुर्यां कर्म चेदहम् ।
 सङ्करस्य च कर्ता स्यामुपहन्यामिमाः प्रजाः ॥
 सक्ताः कर्मण्यविद्वांसो यथा कुर्वन्ति भारत ।
 कुर्याद्विद्वांस्तथासक्तश्चकीर्षुलोकसंग्रहम् ॥

(Gītā III. 21—25)

“For whatsoever a great man does, that very thing other men also do, whatever standard he sets up, the generality of men follow the same. Therefore, Arjuna, though there is nothing in the three worlds for Me to do, nor is there anything worth attaining unattained by Me, yet I continue to

work. For should I not engage in action, unwearied, at any time, great harm will come to the world; for, Arjuna, men follow My path in all matters. If I do not perform action, these worlds will perish; nay, I should be the author of confusion of castes and of the destruction of these people. Arjuna, as the unwise act with attachment, so should the wise man seeking maintenance of the world order act without attachment."

For God Himself, who said this, to engage in any action, which is injurious to the world order, is never possible. Therefore, wherever words like 'Kāma' (lust), 'Ramaṇa' (dalliance), 'Rati' (sexual union) etc., occur in the Śrīmad Bhāgavata, they should not be taken in their vulgar sense, but a different interpretation should be given to them, and the fact is that they bear a different interpretation. In the Gītā, the Lord used the word 'Ramaṇa' in the following verse—

मच्चित्ता मदगतप्राणा बोधयन्तः परस्परम्।
कथयन्तश्च मां नित्यं तुष्यन्ति च रमन्ति च॥
तेषां सततयुक्तानां भजतां प्रीतिपूर्वकम्।
ददामि बुद्धियोगं तं येन मामुपयान्ति ते॥

(X. 9-10)

"With their mind fixed on Me, with their lives surrendered to Me, enlightening one another about My greatness and speaking of Me, they ever remain contented and take delight in Me. On those ever united through meditation with Me and worshipping Me with love, I confer that Yoga of wisdom through which they attain Me."

This is a description of the Sādhaka's novitiate stage; that is, he has not yet realized God. These verses describe the mental state of the devotee as the fruit of which he will realize God. In this state, he sees, hears and delights in God

through his internal senses which are a part and parcel of the mind. This 'Ramaṇa', or delighting of the devotee in God, is never an act of the vulgar senses. It is an extremely sacred mental state. In this state of the mind, he meditates on God, receives the blessings of His touch and carries on conversation with Him. The meaning of words like 'Ramaṇa' (dalliance), Kāma (lust) etc., used in the Bhāgavata should also be understood in some such sense. To attribute to God the guilt of any form of vulgar action is nothing but an outward expression of the mental vulgarity of the critic himself.

The statement that among the five sentiments of devotion, viz., the quiet sentiment and the sentiments of servant, friend, parents and the sweetheart:—the last, or the sweet sentiment, is the best and highest, may no doubt be true from the point of view of the development or expansion of the sentiments; yet it is not necessary that in all devotees all the sentiments should gradually manifest themselves, or that the particular sentiment of a devotee is either superior or inferior in comparison with the sentiment of another. All the sentiments are good in their respective spheres, and whatever sentiment appeals to the heart of a devotee is the best sentiment so far as he is concerned. In the case of Śrī Hanumān, the servant-sentiment is the best of all sentiments. Can he ever give this up in preference to any other sentiment? For Vasudeva and Devakī, Nanda and Yaśodā, the parent-sentiment is the chief of all sentiments. The other sentiments also should be understood on this basis. And it should under no circumstance be imagined that the sweet sentiment means the ordinary lustful relation as between ordinary man and woman, or any vulgar, lustful act. It is a supremely sacred sentiment in which the devotee wholly surrendering himself to his God gets merged in his sweet thoughts, sweet speech and sweet union with Him.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is supreme Brahma, the Paramātmā Himself. He is wholly devoid of any form of evil, and is fully endowed with all auspicious qualities. Through mere hearing, remembrance, meditation and recital of His Name, virtues and sports etc., becoming extremely pure, man attains the invaluable supreme state. How can any evil be ever imagined in Him? Therefore, wherever in the course of the recital of the Divine sports any such reference or word occurs, it should be interpreted in the purest of sense, and never in any vulgar sense. If that does not appear to fit in with the context, its examination should be suspended, regarding it as a subject beyond the capacity of one's small understanding. It should neither be treated as an interpolation, nor as spiritual figure of speech, nor should exception be made even by mistake that there was no harm if such things happened in the case of God. Cultivating the eye of reverence, He should be regarded as wholly and supremely pure. But regarding that our intellect failed on the point, that it was incapable of unravelling the mystery of His Being, discussion on the subject should be dropped.

Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa extolled with His own sacred lips the Divine Love of the Gopīs. Wise men like Uddhava etc., praised this Love without any reservation. If the Gopīs were really unchaste, how could God speak so highly of them and Uddhava and others seek the dust of their feet? The devotion of the Gopīs was wholly exclusive and motiveless. The sentiment of their heart was pure, and, according to that sentiment, the Rāsa (dance) performed by them was also pure. Their very footsteps, utterance, meeting, dance and song—everything was pure and was the expression of the fulness of their ecstasy and Love. There is no scope for the attribution of any vulgarity to them. Through the practice of devotion evils like lust, anger etc., get torn up by their roots.

Their Rāsa (dance) was only an external outpouring of their Love for God. It was not the kind of Rāsa which people nowadays show as a theatrical performance out of monetary consideration.

At several places of the Bhāgavata there are references to the use of liquor, flesh, violence, adultery, theft, falsehood, lust, anger, greed, infatuation, likes, dislikes, arrogance, untruth, deceit, etc. These should neither be regarded as part of any settled doctrine nor worthy of imitation. Regarding the practices as wholly despicable, they should be renounced without hesitation. As a matter of fact, the injunctions found at places in the Bhāgavata, about the abandonment of these forms of evil and impious conduct should alone be adopted for practice. If any reference is found to the presence of any evil in a revered person—e.g., Brahmā's lust and infatuation etc., it should be understood that the incident has been described with the intention of showing the strength of lust and infatuation and emphasizing the need for the use of exceptional care for their eradication. It should never be regarded as a precept nor as a proof that these evils existed in Brahmā and other celestials, saints and Sādhakas. It should in no case be accepted as an exception.

In the Bhāgavata, lust and adultery have been denounced every now and then, anger and falsehood are censured, theft, plunder, murder, hunting and flesh-eating have been interdicted—so much so that slaughter during sacrifice and the use of flesh during the Śrāddha ceremony have been declared as prohibited. Let us take a few examples—

यस्त्वह वा अगम्यां स्त्रियमगम्यं वा पुरुषं योषिदभिगच्छति तावमुत्र कशया
ताडयन्तस्तिगमया सूर्या लोहमय्या पुरुषमालिङ्गयन्ति स्त्रियं च पुरुषस्तुपया सूर्या ।

(V. xxvi. 20)

“In this world, if—a man commits adultery with another's wife or a woman commits the same offence with another

man, the messengers of Yama take them to the hell called 'Taptasūrmi' and thrash them with whips and force the man to embrace a burning image of iron resembling the woman and the woman to embrace a similar burning image of the man."

Svāyambhuva Manu, addressing Dhruva, said—

अलं वत्सातिरोषेण तमोद्वारेण पाप्मना ।
येन पुण्यजनानेतानवधीस्त्वमनागसः ॥

(IV. xi. 7)

"Child, give up now the exceeding wrath under the impulse of which you have slain so many innocent Yakṣas. Anger is a sin and is an open gate to hell."

King Bali said—

'न ह्यसत्यात्परोऽधर्मः'

"There is no sin greater than untruth."

यस्त्वह वै स्तेयेन बलाद्वा हिरण्यरत्नादीनि ब्राह्मणस्य वापहरत्यन्यस्य
वानापदि पुरुषस्तममुत्र राजन् यमपुरुषा अयस्मयैरग्निपिण्डैः सन्दंशैस्त्वचि
निष्कुषन्ति ।

(V. xxvi. 19)

"Whoever, in this world, by theft, or by force, robs either a Brāhmaṇa, or any other person except when, in the latter case, faced by any engrossing calamity, of gold, jewels and other things, is taken after death by the officers of Yama to the hell called 'Sandamśa' and have his skin branded by burning balls of iron and pinched by tongs."

The Lord Himself, addressing King Mucukunda said—

क्षात्रधर्मस्थितो जन्तून् न्यवधीर्मृगयादिभिः ।
समाहितस्तत्पसा जह्यधं मदुपाश्रितः ॥

(X.li. 63)

"As a Kṣatriya, you have killed many living beings in hunting and other pursuits; now, worshipping Me with concentration, wash away that sin by your austerities."

Kapiladeva said—

अर्थेरापादितैर्गुर्व्या हिंसयेतस्ततश्च तान् ।
पुष्णाति येषां पोषेण शेषभुग्यात्यधः स्वयम् ॥

(III. xxx. 10)

“Amassing wealth by tyranny, violence and other objectionable means, man keeps himself engaged in taking care of his wife, children and other dependants and enjoying what is left after their enjoyment goes himself down to hell to reap the fruit of his sins.”

ये त्विह वै दाम्भिका दम्भयज्ञेषु पशून् विशसन्ति तानमुष्मिल्लोके वैशसे नरके पतितान्निरयपतयो यातयित्वा विशसन्ति ।

(V. xxvi. 25)

“Hypocrites who slay animals in their hypocritical sacrifices are thrown after death into the hell called ‘Vaiśasa’ where Yama’s men put them to torment by cutting them to pieces.”

Devarṣi Nārada, pointing to the souls of dead animals in the sky, said to King Prācīnabarhi—

भो भोः प्रजापते राजन् पशून् पश्य त्वयाध्वरे ।
संज्ञापिताञ्जीवसङ्घानिर्धृणेन सहस्रशः ॥
एते त्वां सम्प्रतीक्षन्ते स्मरन्तो वैशसं तव ।
सम्परेतमयः कूटैश्छन्दन्त्युत्थितमन्यवः ॥

(IV. xxv. 7-8)

“O king, look at the thousands of animals in the sky whom you mercilessly killed in your sacrifices. They are all waiting for you, remembering your cruelty. When you go to the next world after death, they would tear you in rage with their iron-like horns.”

Again, Devarṣi Nārada said—

न दद्यादामिषं श्राद्धे न चाद्याद् धर्मतत्त्ववित् ।
मुन्यनैः स्यात्परा प्रीतिर्यथा न पशुहिंसया ॥

(VII. xv. 7)

“He who knows the truth of Dharma should not offer flesh in Śrāddha, nor should he eat it himself; for the gratification the manes derived from food worthy of hermits (vegetarian food) cannot be gained by them through the killing of animals.”

The Bhāgavata has described all evils as fit to be renounced and as the begetter or source of great misfortune and calamities. Only a few instances have been cited here owing to shortness of space in the article.

Wherever in the scriptures it is found that flesh-eating has been allowed, it is in order to restrict and control the craving for flesh of flesh-eaters and finally to bring it to an end. The object of the scriptures is really to lead towards abstention. They permit indulgence within limits with a view to bring about abstention from enjoyments. The Law-giver, Manu, says—

न मांसभक्षणेऽदोषो न मद्ये न च मैथुने ।
प्रवृत्तिरेषा भूतानां निवृत्तिस्तु महाफला ॥

(V. 56)

“Flesh-eating and indulgences in liquor and sex cannot be devoid of evil. These cravings are natural to men, but abstention from them is productive of the greatest good.”

The following are the words of the Lord Himself in the Bhāgavata—

ते मे मतमविज्ञाय परोक्षं विषयात्मकाः ।
हिंसायां यदि रागः स्याद् यज्ञ एव न चोदना ॥
हिंसाविहारा ह्यालब्धैः पशुभिः स्वसुखेच्छ्या ।
यजन्ते देवता यज्ञैः पितृभूतपतीन् खलाः ॥

(XI. xxi. 29-30)

“Wicked men addicted to the world, who find delight in killing, not understanding My secret opinion, kill animals for their own pleasure and worship the gods, manes and the

lords of elements with sacrifices. In the Vedas there is no injunction in favour of killing; those who have a passion for killing, who cannot do without killing, are restricted to do so only during sacrifices. Thus slaughter of animals is enjoined only to restrain their wayward craving.”

The next point is that everything found described in Itihāsas and stories cannot be worthy of imitation. Only the positive commandments of the scriptures have to be reduced to actual conduct. The negative commandments are stronger than the positive. There is no commandment in the scriptures in favour of lust, anger, greed, infatuation, adultery etc.,—all commandments are definitely against them. If anywhere any favourable reference is found, it should in no case be regarded as a delightful discovery or worthy of adoption, in any part, even in the least, or under any circumstance whatsoever.

As a matter of fact, where there is devotion to God, evils like lust and anger can have no existence. Śrī Śukadeva says—

यस्य भक्तिर्भगवति हरौ निःश्रेयसेश्वरे ।
विक्रीडतोऽमृताम्भोधौ किं क्षुद्रैः खातकोदकैः ॥

(VI. xii. 22)

“He who has developed devotion to Śrī Hari (God), who grants final beatitude, sports in the sea of nectar. His mind cannot feel attracted to any enjoyment of this earth or of the celestial region, which are like the turbid waters of small stagnant pools and wells. Where there is complete cessation of attraction for any form of enjoyment and desires, how can prohibited action, sin and vices take place?”

Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsajī says—

खल कामादि निकट नहिं जाहीं ।
बसइ भगति जाके उर माहीं ॥

“He in whose heart the devotion exists, evils like lust cannot go near him.”

Therefore, we should know it for certain that he who is a true devotee, saint or Mahātmā, his heart, his every action and effort, his instructions, thoughts, sight and speech—all are sacred and productive of sanctity. All his conducts are ideal conducts and beneficial to the society at large. We should consider that if the world does not receive the proper lessons of right conduct and practice of virtues from devotees, saints and Mahāpuruṣas, who will personify the ideal of morality in this world? Therefore, if any person interprets the references to words like ‘Kāma’, ‘Ramaṇa’, ‘Rati’ appearing in the Bhāgavata in their ordinary vulgar sense, the interpretation should not receive our intellectual assent. The times are dangerous. Assuming the garb of devotees and saints, who knows how many hypocrites may be cheating the people nowadays for the satisfaction of their vile, selfish desires. It is generally men of this type who taking advantage of such references and words of the sacred scriptures declare the evils as exceptions in Mahāpuruṣas and bring the people under their clutches. Unsophisticated men and women of the world, who are not properly acquainted with the marks and conducts of Mahāpuruṣas, and are ignorant of the proper meaning and intention of such words and references in the scriptures, get easily misled by the words of talkative hypocrites, whose real object is to gain woman, gold, sense-enjoyments, name, fame, position and prestige in the world. Therefore, my humble submission to all brothers and sisters is that they should be careful and never regard the person as a Mahātmā whose conduct exhibits these evils, or who quoting the authority of the scriptures lends his moral allegiance to vice, depravity, adultery, theft, deceit and untruth, etc. In a truly

great soul vice and depravity do not exist at all. Far from thinking of expropriating another's wife and worldly possessions, they shrink from owning as their own even the honour and position sanctioned by the scriptures.

If it is urged that in the Itihāsas, there are found instances of lust and anger possessed by men who had attained Knowledge, the answer is that in men of Knowledge lust, anger and other evils cannot exist. If they exhibit it as an act on the stage for public good, that is a different matter. And if they really possess lust and anger, then, according to the scriptures, they should not be regarded as God-realized saints, Mahātmās, or men of Knowledge, in the genuine sense of the term.

It is true, sinful and depraved souls also can practise devotion to God, and once having taken to devotion, they also can attain exceptional purity. The Lord Himself said—

अपि चेत्सुदुराचारो भजते मामनन्यभाक् ।
साधुरेव स मन्तव्यः सम्यग्व्यवसितो हि सः ॥
क्षिप्रं भवति धर्मात्मा शश्वच्छान्ति निगच्छति ।
कौन्तेय प्रति जानीहि न मे भक्तः प्रणश्यति ॥

(Gītā IX. 30-31)

“Even if the vilest sinner worships Me with exclusive devotion, he should be considered a saint, for he has rightly resolved. Speedily he becomes virtuous and secures lasting peace. Know it for certain, Arjuna, that My devotee never falls.”

All are qualified to practise devotion. Whatever may be the caste of the individual, however low and vile may be his previous conduct, he speedily attains purity when surrendering himself to God, he takes to the practice of devotion and in the end, attaining total freedom from sins, succeeds in realizing God.

Considering all these points, every human being ought to make an attempt to reduce his life into a life of Bhajana. In order to develop exclusive Love for God, he should take to the Japa of the Divine Name, meditation of the Divine Form with knowledge of His virtues, glory, secret and Truth and hear, discourse and reflect on the stories of His sports. This is the supreme duty of man. He who does this attains fully the desires of life through the power of devotion to God. And if he does not seek the satisfaction of any desire, God offers to that devotee even His very Self.

Life is short and full of difficulties of various sorts. What time is spent is past and gone. Now, every moment of the rest of life should be devoted to the service of God—to the practice of His Bhajana. The fulfilment of man's life lies in this. The attainment of supreme blessedness in the form of realization of God is possible only in human life. That has got to be gained. The other forms of enjoyment can be obtained by assuming life in other species of beings as well, but realization of God is possible only in this human existence.

The Lord says—

नृदेहमाद्यं सुलभं सुदुर्लभं प्लवं सुकल्पं गुरुकर्णधारम् ।
मयानुकूलेन नभस्वतेरितं पुमान् भवाब्धिं न तरेत् स आत्महा ॥

(XI. xx. 17)

“This human body is the source of all auspicious fruits; it is easily gained by those who are devoted to virtuous deeds, but exceptionally difficult to men of depraved conduct. It is like a strong boat to cross the sea of metempsychosis; the moment he is sought, the Guru (Preceptor) becomes its pilot, and I, when remembered, push it on towards the goal like a favourable wind. Notwithstanding these facilities, he

who does not cross the sea of Saṁsāra through this body, is truly killing himself by himself."

Bhagavān Śrī Rāma said the very same thing to His subjects—

बङ्गे भाग मानुष तनु पावा । सुर दुर्लभ सब ग्रंथन्हि गावा ॥
 साधन धाम मोच्छ कर द्वारा । पाइ न जेहिं परलोक सँवारा ॥
 सो परत्र दुख पावइ सिर धुनि धुनि पछिताइ ।
 कालहि कर्महि ईस्वरहि मिथ्या दोस लगाइ ॥
 नर तनु भव बारिधि कहुँ बेरो । सन्मुख मरुत अनुग्रह मेरो ॥
 करनधार सदगुर दृढ़ नावा । दुर्लभ साज सुलभ करि पावा ॥
 जो न तरै भव सागर नर समाज अस पाइ ।
 सो कृत निंदक मंदमति आत्माहन गति जाइ ॥

"The human body is obtained through great fortune, all the scriptures describe it as difficult of attainment even by the gods. It is the proper vehicle for religious practices, and is the gate to salvation. He who obtaining it does not secure the good of the next world will suffer there and repent slapping his forehead for his mistake and will falsely blame Time, Karma and God for his sufferings. The human body is the boat to cross the sea of existence and My grace is the favourable wind. The God-realized Guru is the pilot of this strong boat. Thus man has easily obtained facilities which are most difficult to obtain. He who does not cross the sea of existence, even though placed in the midst of such association, that ungrateful creature of slow understanding is thrown into the state of torture suffered by men who are guilty of the crime of committing suicide."

In this Kali age, the practice of God-realization is easy of performance—the whole object may be gained by mere Kīrtana of the Divine Name. In addition, if Satsaṅga

(association of a saint) is obtained, all the more better. The Bhāgavata says—

तुलयाम् लवेनापि न स्वर्गं नापुनर्भवम् ।
भगवत्सङ्गसङ्गस्य मर्त्यानां किमुताशिषः ॥

(I. xviii. 13)

“Not to speak of smaller achievements like attainment of heaven, the value of even a moment’s contact with associates of God, who possess Divine Love, cannot be compared to even salvation, which destroys rebirth. Earthly possessions like sovereignty, etc., cannot even be mentioned for this comparison.”

कलेदोषनिधे राजनस्ति होको महान् गुणः ।
कीर्तनादेव कृष्णस्य मुक्तसङ्गः परं व्रजेत् ॥
कृते यद् ध्यायतो विष्णुं त्रेतायां यजतो मखैः ।
द्वापरे परिचर्यायां कलौ तद्वरिकीर्तनात् ॥

(XII. iii. 51-52)

“O king, Kali is the repository of all evils, but it possesses one great virtue. In this age, through mere Kīrtana of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s name all attachments cease and man realizes God. The fruit obtained in Satyayuga by the practice of meditation, in Tretā by the performance of great sacrifices, and in Dvāpara by worship and personal service, can be attained in Kali by mere Kīrtana of the name of Śrī Hari.”

Therefore, through the Japa and Kīrtana of the Divine Name with faith and reverence, through the cultivation of association with saints, and through the study of scriptures like the Bhāgavata and the Gītā, everyone should strive his utmost to make this human life a success.



Glory of the Devotees

Devotees of God are identical with Him. Their mind and intellect are merged in the Lord, and through these alone do the senses etc., function. The thoughts and actions too of the devotees should, therefore, be regarded as the sport of God Himself. Just as the Lord's abodes and the scenes of His diverse sports are held in reverence as centres of pilgrimage, even so the homes of the devotees and centres of their activity are transformed into so many sacred places. In the words of the venerable Tulasīdāsa, "saints or devotees are the very embodiments of joy and blessings; they are verily the holy Prayāga, the chief of all holy places, though not rooted in one place."

Just as aspirants attain liberation by meditating on God, so do they become eligible for blessedness by contemplating on the lives and attainments of devotees like Yudhiṣṭhira, Prahlāda, Śukadeva, Bharata, Hanumān and so on. This is borne out by Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa who says at the end of Ayodhyā-Kāṇḍa of his Rāmacaritamānasa—

"Those who listen regularly and reverently to the story of Bharata will surely attain devotion to the lotus-feet of Śrī Rāma and Sītā and develop a distaste for the enjoyments of the world."

The activities and writings etc., of holy men tend towards the redemption of the people. Their very birth is intended for establishing righteousness on a firm footing. The Lord manifests Himself on this earth only rarely when unrighteousness gets so rampant that the destruction of evildoers becomes unavoidable; the devotees, however, are available in almost every age. That is why they have been

exalted to a higher position than God Himself. In my opinion, says Tulasīdāsa, “a devotee of Śrī Rāma is greater than Śrī Rāma Himself. While Śrī Rāma is like the ocean, illumined saints are like the clouds (that carry its waters and pour it here, there and everywhere); while the Lord is like a sandal-wood tree, saints are like the winds (that waft its fragrance and scatter it in various directions).”

What more should we say, the Lord Himself is completely under the thumb of His devotees. To Durvāsā, the great sage, who had got enraged with Ambarīṣa, the prince of devotees, and who, when chased by His mighty discus Sudarśana, ultimately sought shelter with Śrī Viṣṇu in Vaikuṇṭha, the Lord says—

“O Brāhmaṇa! I am dominated by My devotees like one who is subordinate to them. Those pious devotees have captured My heart, and I am also dear to them. Without those virtuous devotees who look upon Me as their Supreme goal, I care not for My own Self nor even for Lakṣmī, My eternal Consort. Those who have taken refuge in Me alone, renouncing their wife, children, friends, dwelling, wealth, nay, their very life and the pleasures of this world and the next—how can I dare forsake them, dear sage ? Just as devoted and faithful wives win the heart of their virtuous husbands, so do pious souls who have given their heart to Me and look upon all with the same eye conquer Me by their devotion..... In a nutshell I may tell you that devotees are My very selves and I am the self of the devotees. They know not anyone dearer than I and I know not anyone dearer than they.”*

The Lord ever follows His devotees like a shadow. He considers their joys and sorrows as His own. For their sake

* अहं भक्तपराधीनो ह्यस्वतन्त्र इव द्विज।

साधुभिर्ग्रस्तहृदयो

भक्तैर्भक्तजनप्रियः ॥

He risks His own honour and dignity, nay, His very consort Goddess Lakṣmī. He broke His own vow not to take up arms in the great Mahābhārata war, in order to fulfil the vow of His devotee Bhīṣma. For Arjuna He spared nothing! He assumed the role of his charioteer and even cast a spell of His Māyā (delusive power) on Duryodhana and others in order to contrive the death of Jayadratha! He is pledged to protect the life and redeem the word of honour of His devotees even at the risk of exposing Himself to calumny. He has taken a solemn vow as it were to regard the honour and dignity, as well as the joys and sorrows of the devotees as His own. "I belong to the devotees and the devotees belong to Me; this is My sacred vow," declared the Lord to His beloved Arjuna.

What wonder, then, if the mere thought and remembrance of such glorious, blessed and godlike devotees should burn the heap of one's sins, reduce Mukti (liberation) to the position of one's handmaid, and ensure unflinching devotion, attachment and access to the lotus-feet of the Lord? Like meditation on God contemplation on saints also brings salvation. Through contemplation on their form we are reminded of their ideas, virtues and deeds and their image is imprinted on our mind. And just as light dispels darkness,

नाहमात्मानमाशासे मद्दक्तैः साधुभिर्विना ।
 श्रियं चात्यन्तिकीं ब्रह्मन् येषां गतिरहं परा ॥
 ये दारागारपुत्राप्तान् प्राणान् वित्तमिमं परम् ।
 हित्वा मां शरणं याताः कथं तांस्त्यकुमुत्सहे ॥
 मयि निर्बद्धहृदयाः साधवः समदर्शनाः ।
 वशीकुर्वन्ति मां भक्त्या सत्स्त्रयः सत्पतिं यथा ॥

 साधवो हृदयं मह्यं साधूनां हृदयं त्वहम् ॥
 मदन्यते न जानन्ति नाहं तेभ्यो मनागपि ।

(Śrīmad Bhāgavata IX. iv. 63—66, 68)

so does the remembrance of their virtues and deeds wipe out all our sins.

Persons seeking their spiritual welfare and liberation should, therefore, indefatigably try to associate with, and serve holy men. This is the only delightful and easy way of developing undying love for the feet of the Lord, and of realizing God. Enumerating the ways of overcoming Māyā, Devarṣi Nārada says in his "Aphorisms on Bhakti"—

कस्तरति कस्तरति मायाम्? यः सङ्घं त्यजति यो महानुभावं सेवते यो निर्ममो भवति ॥

"Who crosses Māyā? He who shakes off attachment, serves the saints and owns nothing as his own."

Freedom from attachment and desires and renunciation of the feelings of 'I' and 'mine', however, are very hard to achieve; but the service of saints, like idol-worship, is easy for all. Nay, it is even easier and more practicable and open to direct experience than idol-worship. For cultivation of faith in, and attachment to, a lifeless image may be difficult to some extent; but the service of godlike saints, talking and moving in our midst and constantly showering affection on us, is naturally quite feasible.

The very contact of saints, nay, their very sight brings redemption to the soul. The scriptures have sung the glory of association with saints at many places. Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa says in his Rāmacaritamānasa : "Whoever at whatever place or time and by whatever means attained wisdom, fame, wealth, happiness or salvation, know it to be the result of association with saints; there is no other way either in the world or in the Vedas."

In sooth, there is no easier, simpler and better way of attaining salvation than Satsaṅga. Of course, if cultivated without faith, it may be slow in bringing about the desired result. No doubt it will continue to benefit us imperceptibly even then; but acceleration in spiritual practice and placidity

of mind may not be experienced till late. Association with saints cultivated with faith and reverence, however, yields immediate results. "Through Satsaṅga," says Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa, "a crow may be transformed into a cuckoo and a heron into a swan."

Water kept in a bottle of white glass exposed to the sun will not get hot quite soon; it will be slow in absorbing the heat of the sun. The same water, if kept in a black bottle, will be heated very quickly; for the black colour possesses a special capacity to absorb the sun's rays. Like the sun, saints are incessantly emitting the heat of divine love and the rays of divine effulgence. The mind of those who are lacking in faith does not readily submit to their influence; but those who have dyed their mind in the dark hue of faith—dark in the sense that it does not take any other colour—are quickly affected by that divine heat and effulgence and attain the *summum bonum* of their life.

Cultivation of association with saints should, therefore, be accompanied by an endeavour to develop faith and reverence. The real way of developing faith is known to God alone; true reverence can be attained only by those who may be blessed by God with faith in His devotees. Hence our foremost prayer to God should be that He may develop in us faith in and reverence for His lotus-feet as well as for those of His beloved devotees. Talks about their virtues and glory, the contact and sight of reverent souls and exchange of views about faith and reverence with them also tend to strengthen one's faith. Faith and reverence can be awakened and developed in one's heart even by witnessing the activities of truly reverent souls. Even the followers of other religions were overwhelmed with love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa at the mere sight of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and by listening to the divine names uttered by him.

In conclusion it may not be out of place to make on this occasion a few observations regarding the characteristics of saints. Whoever is possessed of the traits given in verses 13 to 20 of Chapter XII of the *Gītā* is a saint and a devotee. Some of these traits can be known only by one's own self. The scriptures speak of few such marks by which saints can be distinguished by others. We shall try to give below a few outstanding marks of the devotees.

The foremost characteristic of a devotee is his motiveless kindness. He is always engaged in doing good to others. This trait is common to men of Knowledge and devotees both. The *Gītā* speaks of such saints as "actively engaged in doing good to all creatures" (XII. 4) and "friendly as well as compassionate" (Ibid., XII. 13). The next important mark is their loving nature. Kindness coupled with love brings "disinterested friendliness." Saints have equal love for all. "Free from passion, arrogance and wrath, those who are devoted to the lotus-feet of Śrī Rāma," says Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa "view the whole universe as permeated by Him; whom can they ever antagonize?"

The next important mark of the saints is their magnetism. Like a lamp they diffuse light all round, with this difference that while the former is material, the latter are embodiments of spiritual effulgence. Their sight alone enhances our wisdom; their contact makes us alive even to our ordinary faults and reforms our conduct. It calls forth virtues, drives away vices and evil propensities and purifies our heart. Then the minutest faults come to the surface and are wiped out by effort. None can misbehave in the presence of devotees; their sight naturally reminds us of God.

On coming face to face with a true devotee, a person equipped with extraordinary faith and reverence would feel as if devotion, equability, compassion, tranquillity, love,

joy, spiritual light and a host of other virtues are radiating from the saint and entering into him. He will actually perceive the evil propensities in his heart being burnt up as hay, and will behold an ocean of kindness and love welling up in the saint's eyes.

As a matter of fact, the whole earth and sky as well as the animate and inanimate creation falling within the range of the saints' vision get sanctified.

□ □

The Divine Name, Form, Sports and Abode

Prior to the starting of the process of Creation, there existed Brahma alone, without attributes and form, the embodiment of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. When the process of creation started, it was marked by a natural agitation in Prakṛti, or God's Energy, who is identified with God, and is called by the name of Unmanifest Māyā, for the working out of the fruits of Karma of Jīvas, due to which She got divided into the three qualities. Just as when the curd is churned, butter and buttermilk get separated, even so the agitation in Prakṛti divided her into Vidyā and Avidyā. Thus She assumed three aspects, i.e., the agitation in her is known as Rajoguṇa, and one product of that agitation, Vidyā is Sattvaguṇa and the other product, Avidyā, is Tamoguṇa. God possessed of these three qualities is the Formless aspect of God, possessed of qualities (सगुण निराकार). It is He who brings about the first Creation. For carrying out the processes of Creation, Sustenance and Destruction of the Universe, the same God manifests Himself as Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa, and it is the same Formless God, possessed of attributes, who assuming the different divine Forms with attributes, such as, Śrī Nṛsiṁha, Śrī Rāma, Śrī Kṛṣṇa etc., sports in the world in the different ages. Just as the atomic state of water in the sky gets transformed into sap and then into water, and just as the atomic formless state of earth gets transformed, firstly, into smell and then into the solid earth, even so the attributeless and formless Brahma,

assuming firstly the formless aspect of God with attributes manifests Himself as God possessed of Form and attributes; but as water in all its states of atom, sap and gross water, is nevertheless water, and the causal, subtle and gross states of the earth are essentially earth, even so the three aspects of God, viz., (1) attributeless and formless, (2) formless but with attributes, and (3) possessed of both—form and attributes are essentially God Himself. In this way, understanding the integral form of Supreme Brahma or God, when man takes to His worship with reverence and Love, he may very soon attain liberation from *Avidyā* as well as from modifications like birth, death, old age and disease and realize God.

In this frightful age of Kali, the practice of devotion is the best and easiest way of realizing God. When the Lord incarnates Himself on earth assuming a Form with attributes, ignorant folk fail to recognize Him, for He is veiled by His *Māyā* (*Gitā* VII. 25). He who surrendering himself to the Lord devotes himself to the practice of Devotion, the Lord removes the veil of *Māyā* from before him, on account of which he succeeds in getting a direct vision of the Lord's divine Form, possessed of attributes. That is why it is the duty of every individual to practise devotion to the Lord with reverence and Love.

For those who proceed to practise Devotion, one very easy and important method is this. Among divine objects, the four chief are—the Divine Name, the Divine Form, the Divine Sports and the Divine Abode. Their virtue, glory, truth and secret—these four should be properly grasped, and the glory, truth and secret of the virtue should also be clearly understood, and the truth and secret of the glory should be similarly comprehended: and they should all be

served through the four instruments of human body, viz., the ear, the eye, the mind and the organ of speech. Though God can be worshipped through practically all the aspects of the mind, and all the senses: nevertheless the four instruments mentioned above are the chief among them. That is to say, the ears should be devoted to hearing with reverence and faith the descriptions of the above four objects from the lips of devotees, the eyes should be devoted to the study of elevating scriptures, the mind should be devoted to reflections on them, and the organ of speech should be devoted to their recital. Through this practice, pursued with reverence and faith, the Sādhaka obtains the direct vision of God, and thereby attains supreme Bliss, infinite equanimity and the true knowledge of God.

Now, in order to have a clearer idea of the above objects, they are being discussed below in some detail—

The Virtue of the Divine Name

All the divine qualities of God like forbearance, compassion, peace, love etc., abide in the Divine Name as well; for through the practices of Japa, chanting, hearing and remembrance of the Name, those divine qualities of the Name's Possessor (God) naturally make their appearance in the Sādhaka. What more should be said in praise of the virtue of the Divine Name! Gosvāmī Śrī Tulasīdāsajī says—

“How far shall I describe the greatness of the Name! Even Rāma Himself cannot (completely) recount its virtues.”*

The Glory of the Divine Name

Through the practice of Japa, loud chanting, hearing and remembrance of the Name, all accumulated sins of the

* कहौं कहौं लगि नाम बड़ाई । रामु न सकहिं नाम गुन गाई॥

past, all evils like egoism and mineness, attraction and hatred, lust and anger, greed and delusion etc., all forms of evil conduct like falsehood, hypocrisy, violence, theft, adultery, addiction to liquor, gambling etc., and the three forms of misery—(1) elemental, (2) caused by gods and (3) caused by the mind—get totally extinct and God is realized.

Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsajī says—

“Through remembrance of the sacred Name Hanumān, the child of the wind-god, keeps Rāma under his control debased Ajāmila, the lord of elephants and the harlot got their liberation through the glory of Śrī Hari’s Name.”*
Again—

“Hold the jewel of Rāma’s Name on the tongue, says Tulasī, using it as the threshold; If thou dost want light, both within and without.”†

Another poet says—

“When I held the Name in my heart, sin was destroyed at once, as if a spark of fire fell on a heap of dry grass.”‡

The Bhāgavata says—

अज्ञानादथवा ज्ञानादुत्तमश्लोकनाम यत्।
सङ्कीर्तितमधं पुंसो दहेदेधो यथानलः ॥

(VI. ii. 18)

“When the Name of glorious Hari is uttered, either consciously or unconsciously, it at once destroys the entire stock of sins of the utterer, even as fire burns up fuel.”

* सुमिरि पवनसुत पावन नामू । अपने बस करि राखे रामू॥

अपतु अजामिलु गजु गनिकाऊ । भए मुकुत हरि नाम प्रभाऊ॥

† राम नाम मनिदीप धरु जीह देहरीं ढार ।

तुलसी भीतर बाहेरहुँ जौं चाहसि उजिआर॥

‡ जबहि नाम हिरदै धर्यो भयो पापको नास ।

मानौ चिनगी अग्निकी परी पुराने धास॥

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu said—

नामामकारि बहुधा निजसर्वशक्ति-
स्तत्रार्पिता नियमितः स्मरणे न कालः ॥

“God has graciously revealed many divine Names and has infused all His powers into them.”

In the Gītā, the Lord says—

अपि चेत्सुदुराचारो भजते मामनन्यभाक् ।
साधुरेव स मन्तव्यः सम्यग्व्यवसितो हि सः ॥
क्षिप्रं भवति धर्मात्मा शश्वच्छान्ति निगच्छति ।
कौन्तेय प्रति जानीहि न मे भक्तः प्रणश्यति ॥

(IX. 30-31)

“Even if the vilest sinner worships Me with exclusive devotion, he should be considered a saint; for he has rightly resolved and is positive in his belief that there is nothing like devoted worship. Speedily he becomes virtuous and secures lasting peace. Know it for certain, Arjuna, that My devotee never falls.”

The Truth about the Name

The Divine Name is identical with God: that is to say, there is not the least difference between God and His Name. The Lord said in the Gītā:—‘यज्ञानं जपयज्ञोऽस्मि’ (X. 25) i.e., “Other forms of sacrifice are only means to My realization, whereas the sacrifice in the form of Japa is the very same as Myself.” As a matter of fact, God reveals Himself in the form of His Name. God’s Form, God’s Knowledge and God’s Name—these three are identical things; hence when Japa of the Name is performed, it automatically leads to remembrance of God. The understanding of this fact means understanding the truth about the Name.

The Kathopaniṣad says—

एतद्व्येवाक्षरं ब्रह्म एतद्व्येवाक्षरं परम् ।
एतद्व्येवाक्षरं ज्ञात्वा यो यदिच्छति तस्य तत् ॥

(I.ii.16)

“The word Om is Brahma with attributes, it is the same as Supreme Brahma beyond attributes. Knowing this very word Om, whatever a man seeks, that he obtains.”

The Secret about the Name

Mental practice of Japa is hundred times more powerful than practice through lips. And that mental practice, again, when performed with reverence and love becomes infinitely more fruitful, and when performed secretly and disinterestedly it leads to an early realization of God.

The Rāmacaritamānasa says—

“The devotee whose mind, speech and action follows Me, and who practises Bhajana in a disinterested spirit; I always stay in the lotus of his heart.” Again—

“He who practises remembrance (of God) with love in his heart, crosses the ocean of existence like one crossing the mark of a cow’s hoof.”*

The Sādhaka who understands the secret of the Divine Name will never commit sin, or practise hypocrisy, under the protection of the Name. Commission of sin under the belief that the Divine Name is potent enough to eradicate all its evil effects, and the practice of Japa, only as an external show, to create an impression on people, while secretly engaged in the commission of sin, are what is meant by committing sin and practising hypocrisy under the protection of the Name. The devotee, who knows the secret of the Name, remains untouched by these evils.

The Virtue of the Divine Form

The Lord’s Form, colour, appearance and charm, are exceptionally sweet, soft, loving, attractive, beautiful, bright,

* बचन कर्म मन मोरि गति भजनु करहि निःकाम ।
तिन्ह के हृदय कमल महुँ करडँ सदा विश्राम ॥
सादर सुमिरन जे नर करहीं । भव बारिधि गोपद इव तरहीं ॥

transcendent, graceful and wonderful, showing qualities like forgiveness, compassion, peace, love, justice, friendliness, straightforwardness, sweetness, equanimity, generosity, gentleness, heroism, gravity, truthfulness, pridelessness, lack of egoism, lack of enmity, fearlessness, purity, tenderness and mildness etc., in their infinite degree and best form. This is only a rough enumeration of God's infinite qualities.

The Glory of the Divine Form

Complete power, majesty, energy, strength, ability, knowledge, dispassion, virtue, fame, prosperity, dignity, glory, splendour, capacity of creation, protection and destruction of the universe, omniscience, support of all, all-pervasiveness, ruler of all, lord of all, the knower of all hearts, possession of the power of doing what is impossible and undoing what is possible—these are all glories. Just as the rising of the sun totally drives away darkness, even so remembrance of, and meditation on, the Form of God drive away all forms of misery, modification of the mind, and evil sinful conduct and endowing man with divine qualities and good conduct, take him across the ocean of existence and bring about God-realization.

The Lord says in the *Gītā*—

अनन्यचेताः सततं यो मां स्मरति नित्यशः ।
तस्याहं सुलभः पार्थ नित्ययुक्तस्य योगिनः ॥

(VIII. 14)

तेषामहं	समुद्धर्ता	मृत्युसंसारसागरात् ।
भवामि	नचिरात्पार्थ	मध्यावेशितचेतसाम् ॥

(XII.7)

“Arjuna, he who always and constantly thinks of Me with undivided mind, to that *Yogī*, always absorbed in Me, I am easily attainable.”

“These, Arjuna, I speedily rescue from the ocean of birth and death, their mind being fixed on Me.”

Truth about the Divine Form

Just as the smallest particle of water in the sky, vapour, fog, cloud, drizzle, hail and snow all these are in truth nothing but water, even so everything possessed of attributes or attributeless, with or without form, manifest or unmanifest, insentient or sentient, unmoving or moving, gross or subtle, effect or cause, and whatever is beyond these, all are, in truth, God Himself.

The Lord said in the *Gītā*—

बहूनां जन्मनामन्ते ज्ञानवान्मां प्रपद्यते ।
वासुदेवः सर्वमिति स महात्मा सुदुर्लभः ॥

(VII. 19)

“In the very last of all births, the man of realization worships Me, realizing that all this is God. Such a great soul is very rare.”

In the *Bhāgavata*, the Lord said—

मनसा वचसा दृष्ट्या गृह्णतेऽन्यैरपीन्द्रियैः ।
अहमेव न मत्तोऽन्यदिति बुद्ध्यध्वमञ्जसा ॥

(XI. xiii. 24)

“Whatever is perceived through the mind, speech or sight, or any other organ of sense, all that is but I Myself. There is nothing at all apart from Me, know this for certain.”

Secret of the Divine Form

That omniscient, almighty, all-pervasive God, both with and without attributes, manifests Himself on earth as His divine incarnation and His virtue, glory, truth and secret are so incomprehensible, infinite and divine in character that none but Himself can truly know Him. This is His secret.

In the Gītā the Lord says—

अजोऽपि सन्नव्ययात्मा भूतानामीश्वरोऽपि सन् ।
प्रकृतिं स्वामधिष्ठाय सम्भवाम्यात्ममायया ॥

(IV. 6)

“Though unborn and immortal, and also the Lord of all beings, I manifest Myself through My Yogamāyā, keeping My nature under control.”

And Arjuna says:—

सर्वमेतदृतं मन्ये यन्मां वदसि केशव ।
न हि ते भगवन्व्यक्तिं विदुर्देवा न दानवाः ॥
स्वयमेवात्मनात्मानं वेत्थ त्वं पुरुषोत्तम ।

(X. 14-15)

“Keśava, I believe as true all that You tell me. Lord, neither gods nor the demons are aware of Your manifestation through Līlā. O Supreme Puruṣa, You Yourself know Yourself through Yourself.”

Bringing out this secret of the Lord’s form, the Rāmacaritamānasa says—

“Then, manifesting Himself in numberless forms, the benevolent Lord met everybody, showing appropriate courtesy to all; all at once, and in a moment, He met everybody; Umā, the secret of it nobody knew.”*

And, he who meditates on the Form of the Lord is very dear to the Lord. This is also a top secret. The Lord Himself said—

“Though everybody praises Vaikuṇṭha, and the Vedas and Purāṇas also extol it; it is not as dear to Me as Ayodhyā; this fact is known only to a rare few.” †

* अमित रूप प्रगटे तेहि काला । जथा योग मिले सबहि कृपाला ॥

छन महिं सबहि मिले भगवाना । उमा मरम यह काहुँ न जाना ॥

† जद्यपि सब बैकुंठ बखाना । बेद पुरान बिदित जगु जाना ॥

अवधपुरी सम प्रिय नहिं सोऊ । यह प्रसंग जानइ कोऊ कोऊ ॥

The Virtue, Glory, Truth and Secret of the Lord's Sports

There is a story connected with the Lord's manifestation as Śrī Rāma. When Vibhīṣaṇa came to take shelter under Śrī Rāma, the Lord requested Sugrīva to give his opinion as to what should be done. Sugrīva said—"Lord ! The Rākṣasas are very deceptive by nature. Who knows with what intention he has come—whether as a spy or with any other motive? When a favourable opportunity presents itself, a Rākṣasa may cause us injury. That is why, in my opinion, he should be treated as a prisoner." Thereupon, the Lord replied—"Friend ! what you say is no doubt very judicious; but a man possessed of a wicked heart can never approach Me. If he has come as a spy, even then we have nothing to fear, for Lakṣmaṇa possesses the power to exterminate in a moment all the Rākṣasas of the world. And if he has come to seek refuge out of fear, then the rule I follow is—

मम पन सरनागत भय हारी।

"My vow is to destroy the fear of one, who surrenders himself to Me."

In the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki, there is this verse—

सकृदेव प्रपन्नाय तवास्मीति च याचते।
अभयं सर्वभूतेभ्यो ददाम्येतद् व्रतं मम॥

(VI. xviii. 33)

"He who saying even once, 'Lord, I am Thine', expresses the desire for surrender to Me, I make him free of fear from all beings—this is My vow."

After this deliberation, Śrī Hanumān and others brought Vibhīṣaṇa in the presence of the Lord. The moment he came there, Vibhīṣaṇa fell prostrate at the Lord's feet and took shelter under Him. The Lord clasped Vibhīṣaṇa to His

bosom, and then and there getting water of the ocean anointed him as the ruler of Laṅkā.

With reference to this, the fact of asking Sugrīva as to what should be done with Vibhīṣaṇa, and then praising his opinion as judicious, expresses both high policy and love on the part of the Lord. Not to abandon one who has taken refuge under Him:—this is love for the surrendering soul : and the anointing of Vibhīṣaṇa as the ruler of Laṅkā:—this expresses both policy and generosity. These are in a general way the virtues of the Lord's Sports.

That a person possessed of a wicked heart cannot approach the Lord—this indicates the Lord's glory. And Lakṣmaṇa's capacity to kill all Rākṣasas in a moment, derived as it is from the Lord Himself, also expresses the Lord's glory.

God Himself, the Supreme Brahma, manifested Himself on earth as Śrī Rāma. This form of knowledge of the divinity is understanding the truth of God.

The Lord wanted to make free of fear to Vibhīṣaṇa. But concealing this motive, He asked the opinion of Sugrīva and other counsellors and praising what all of them said, actually did what he wanted to do. The deception and illusive power of the Rākṣasas could not operate in the presence of the Lord, Sugrīva and others were ignorant of this; that is why the Lord revealed the secret to them—

जो पै दुष्ट हृदय सोइ होई ।
मोरें सन्मुख आव कि सोई ॥

“If he really possessed a wicked heart, would he come to Me?”

By this statement, the Lord indirectly revealed His hidden glory that a man with a wicked heart could not go near Him, and that he who went near Him was deprived of

all evils. Understanding of this revelation by the Lord of His own secret means understanding the secret of God.

There is another story connected with the Lord's incarnation as Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Kṛṣṇa accompanied by His playmates, the cowherd boys, went to enjoy a repast on the bank of the Yamunā. When opening their hanging trays, the boys began to eat, Śrī Kṛṣṇa took His seat in the middle of them, and the boys sat making circles round Him, and each of them praising his own food made the companions burst with laughter. With a morsel of food in His hand, Śrī Kṛṣṇa by His wit and humour made the boys merry to such an extent that all got totally oblivious of their surroundings. They forgot even the calves whom they had come to tend, and the calves went deep into the forest. When at last they remembered the calves, the boys got frightened. But the Lord said, "Fear not; I shall presently bring them back with Me." So saying, the Lord went in search of them. At the sight of the child like play of the Lord, the Creator Brahmā, got deluded. He first stole the calves and thereafter the cowherd boys. Failing to trace the calves when the Lord on His return found that the cowherd boys also had vanished He at once understood that all this was Brahmā's doing. Then, in order to increase the joy of the mothers of the cowherd boys and mother cows and destroy the delusion of Brahmā, He Himself became the exact replicas of the calves and cowherd boys. He manifested Himself in as many forms as there were calves and cowherd boys, with the exact proportions of their bodies, hands and feet, with exactly the kinds of sticks, horns, flutes, leaves and hanging trays they possessed, with exactly the clothes, ornaments, dispositions, natures, virtues, names, forms, and years they carried, imitating all their amusements and sports. The Lord,

thereby, gave a practical demonstration of the truth, viz., "Everything in the universe is full of Viṣṇu."*

Śrī Baladeva at first remained ignorant of this change; but when He noticed that the affection of the mothers for their children had grown to an abnormal extent, and the mother cows showed inordinate love even to the calves that had weaned, He was surprised, and turned His gaze towards them with a view to know the truth. Then He found that all the calves, their protectors, the cowherd boys, and whatever they possessed, were all Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself, and He was astounded !

According to the Brahmic measurement of time, the sport took up only a 'Truṭi'.† On His return, Brahmā failed to understand which of the groups of boys and calves were genuine, and which imitation. As he stood thus reflecting, he perceived the boys and calves in the form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Thus he understood the divinity of the Lord and at once fell prostrate on the ground like a log, and praising the Lord in a voice choked with emotion began to crave for His forgiveness. Thereupon, the Lord withdrew His illusive power.

Taking of repast with the boys in the manner stated above, and playing with them, indicate Love. Making Himself the exact imitation of the cowherd boys and calves, the Lord treated the mothers of the boys and the mother-cows with the motherly sentiment, and this expresses His

* यावद्

वत्सपवत्सकाल्पकवपुर्यावित्कराङ्गप्रयादिकं

यावद् यष्टिविषाणवेणुदलशिग् यावद्विभूषाम्बरम् ।

यावच्छीलगुणाभिधाकृतिवयो यावद् विहारादिकं

सर्वं विष्णुमयं गिरोऽङ्गवदजः सर्वस्वरूपो बभौ ॥

(Bhāgavata X. xiii. 19)

† 'Truṭi' is a minute space of time equal to one-fourth of the 'Kṣaṇa', and half a 'Lava'.

compassion and Love. Showing Brahmā the wonder of His Sport, and thereby destroying his delusion—this is also an expression of the Lord's compassion. These are how the virtues in the Lord's Sports have to be scanned and understood.

Through His wonderful, divine power, the Lord assumed innumerable forms:—this is how the glory of His Sport should be appreciated.

The cowherd boys, the calves, their sticks, flutes etc., all these were, in reality God Himself. It was the Lord, Who, assuming those various forms, sported. This is how the truth about the Lord's Sport should be understood.

The desire of the mothers of the boys and of the mother-cows to worship God through the motherly sentiment was satisfied in this way. This is understanding the secret of this Sport.

Every action of the Lord, at every step, is full of auspicious virtues. Therefore, the detection in every act of the Lord His infinite, incomprehensible qualities like forgiveness, compassion, love, equanimity etc., is detection of virtues in His Sport.

Understanding thus the virtue, glory, truth and secret in the Lord's Sports, when one devotes oneself to their sight, reflection, remembrance and imitation, holding them as setting the standard; in other words, when one imitates the conduct of the Lord in actual practice, his heart will attain purity and he will thus gain his liberation. Understanding of this fact means understanding of the glory of the Divine Sport.

Just as the cowherd boys, the calves, their sticks, horns, flutes and their frolics etc., were all God Himself and divine, even so, subject, object and action, and whatever there is in this universe, all are, in truth, God Himself. The

understanding of this fact is understanding the truth of the Divine Sport.

The actions of God, inasmuch as they are devoid of selfishness and egoism, are supremely pure and auspicious by nature i.e., whatever God does with reference to an individual, He does it only for the individual's good; and all His actions are extremely pure. The understanding of this fact is understanding the secret of the Divine Sport.

The Divine Abode

The word Abode, here, is intended to mean that Supreme Abode of God, which is Consciousness Itself, eternal and divine in quality; which is above all, best of all, eternal and true; which is regarded by the worshipper of Brahma as the Abode of Brahma, by the knower of the Vedas as the Abode of Truth, by the worshipper of Śrī Kṛṣṇa as Goloka, by the worshipper of Śrī Rāma as Sāketa, by the worshipper of Viṣṇu as Vaikunṭha, by the worshipper of Śiva as the Abode of Śiva—which is thus called by various names by the worshippers of various schools of thought, and which all of them regard as the highest, best and supremely divine; but which being beyond the reach of the intellect, mind and speech is quite extraordinary from all the descriptions given of it.

The Virtue of the Divine Abode

Forgiveness, compassion, peace, equanimity, love, justice etc., which are the constant virtues of God, are naturally present in the divine Abode. For God Himself is manifest there in the form of His Abode. That is why devotees living in this Abode are endowed by nature with these qualities. Lovers of God, who obtain a direct vision of the Lord, go to that supreme Abode, and as the result of their direct sight of God, these qualities naturally make their appearance in

them; and Sādhakas who reach the divine Abode with the help of practices like Bhajana, meditation, Satsaṅga, and study of the scriptures etc., develop almost all these qualities before they enter there; but in case there remains some deficiency in any of them, it is removed the very moment he enters that region. This, in a nutshell, is the merit or virtue of the divine Abode.

The Glory of the Divine Abode

The glory of the divine Abode is such that he who goes there does not return. If for the good of the world, he at all comes down on earth, either together with God, as an associate of God, or under the behest of God, with special powers, in the form of Kāraka-Puruṣa, his birth, actions and body in both cases being blameless, pure and divine, his descent is equivalent to no descent at all. For he remains wholly untouched by the illusion of the world and all products of that illusion, and his body also though a product of Māyā, is above all blemish. Those who live in that Abode possess bodies which are free from birth, death, decay and disease, and all other kinds of modifications, and which attaining utmost purity becomes like God's own body, divine in essence, full of consciousness, transcendent and endowed with all virtues, and except the powers of creation, preservation and maintenance of the world. They come to possess all the other glories and powers of God. Whatever objects there are in that world are all divine conscious and transcendent in character. This in a nutshell is the glory of the divine Abode.

Truth about the Divine Abode

God manifests Himself in the form of His Abode. Hence God's Abode is the same as God Himself. The formless and attributeless Supreme Brahma, the embodiment

of Existence, Sentience and Bliss, first becomes formless God, possessed of attributes, and thereafter manifests Himself as the Supreme Abode. Thus the Abode of God is identical with God. This knowledge constitutes the truth about the divine Abode.

The Secret of the Divine Abode

All the mysteries and secret divine facts connected with the virtue, glory, truth and secret of God and His Abode, which cannot be comprehended while in this world, can be properly comprehended, exactly as they are, when one goes to that Supreme Abode. That is no sooner one goes there, he directly realizes the truth and secret of what God and His Abode are in reality. There he comes to know what was unknown before, experiences what was beyond experience, sees what was unseen, hears what was unheard of and comprehends what was incomprehensible, for on reaching there, the intellect, mind and senses all become divine. What we hear and understand about God and His Abode in this world, the actuality about them is quite different—for the intellect, mind and speech of this world cannot reach that region. Their secret and mystery get wholly revealed only when one reaches that Abode, and then alone all doubts about the same cease to exist. The comprehension of this fact is comprehension of the secret of the divine Abode.

Places on earth which were sanctified by the Lord's sports, such as Ayodhyā, Mathurā, Vṛndāvana etc., are also regarded as His Supreme Abodes. For residence in these places, with faith and love, endows one with the qualities of God, and the understanding of their truth and secret leads to the growth of reverence, love and devotion, and death in those places removing the stains of sin, brings about liberation.

Now, an attempt will be made to explain how the glory, truth and secret of God's virtues, and the truth and secret of His glory, should be understood.

The Glory of God's Virtues

Through the hearing, reflection, contemplation, narration and chanting of God's transcendent qualities like forgiveness, compassion and Love etc., those qualities in their entirety make their appearance in man, who being thus freed from all evils attains God-realization. This is the glory of God's virtues.

The Truth about God's Virtues

All the qualities of God are divine, and full of consciousness, and not different from God Himself. In that region, there is no difference between virtues and their possessor. The knowledge of this fact is knowledge of the truth about God's virtues.

The Secret of God's Virtues

In the qualities of God, like compassion, Love etc., this secret should be comprehended that they are wholly motiveless and pure in character; they are untainted by evils like timidity, attachment, desire, shame, self-interest and fear etc. Thus all God's virtues are motiveless, infinite, divine and pure. He who understands this secret of the divine virtues completely surrenders himself to God and offers his exclusive love to God, and thereby realizes God. Vibhīṣaṇa also surrendered himself to God, hearing the report, and understanding the secret, of God's compassion and Love. He himself affirmed this in the following words—

श्रवन सुजसु सुनि आयउँ प्रभु भंजन भव भीर।
त्राहि त्राहि आरति हरन सरन सुखद रघुबीर॥

“I have come hearing Your fame that my Lord is the dispeller of fear of birth and death. O Hero of Raghu’s race, the remover of distress, and bestower of happiness on the surrendering soul, pray save me, save me !”

And he who comprehends the secret of the above qualities gets endowed with those qualities. While describing the marks of devotees, the Lord said in the *Gītā* that virtues like compassion, love, forgiveness, non-attachment, pridelessness and equanimity etc., naturally make their appearance in them (XII. 13).

All the virtues that are observed in all beings of this universe represent the reflection of only a fraction of the divine qualities of that ocean of virtues, God. This understanding is the same as understanding the secret of God’s virtues.

The Truth about God’s Glory

All the glories of God, like power, majesty etc., are identical with God. Just as the light and heat of fire are identical with fire, even so God’s glories are identical with Him. This knowledge is knowledge of the truth about God’s glory.

The Secret of God’s Glory

The effulgence in the fire, sun and moon, and all that is glorious, brilliant and powerful in the world are but a manifestation of a spark of God’s glory. The Lord says in the *Gītā*—

यदादित्यगतं तेजो जगद्दासयतेऽखिलम् ।
यच्चन्द्रमसि यच्चाग्नौ तत्तेजो विद्धि मामकम् ॥

(XV. 12)

“The effulgence inherent in the sun, which illuminates the entire universe, and that which exists in the moon as well as in the fire, know it to be My effulgence.”

Again—

यद्यद्विभूतिमत्सत्त्वं श्रीमद्भूर्जितमेव वा ।
तत्तदेवावगच्छ त्वं मम तेजोऽशसम्भवम् ॥

(X.41)

“Every such object as is glorious, brilliant and powerful, know that to be a manifestation of a spark of My effulgence.”

We shall now try to explain how the above objects should be worshipped.

Sweet dissertations on the divine Name, Form, Sports, Abode, their virtue, glory, truth and secret should be heard from the lips of the lovers of God, with faith* and love†, in a disinterested spirit‡, and hearing them, one should feel stupefied by an accession of love, even as the deer is kept spell-bound by the music of the guitar, and get horripilation, tears, choking of voice and delight in the heart—these constitute worship of those things through the ears. Therefore, one should go to devotees who have attained wisdom, prostrate himself before them, render them physical service, ask them questions in a guileless spirit and hear from them the truth and secret of the above things relating to God.

* Faith in God, saints, scriptures and the other world, tinged with reverence, equal to the strength of faith in perceptible things, is called Śraddhā. When this spirit of Śraddhā grows, an individual becomes like a puppet in the hands of his object of faith, and leads life according to the latter's promptings and behests. Therein he finds supreme peace and bliss, and disobedience to such promptings and behests is out of the question for him; and if due to any cause there is a lapse in the practice of obedience, he regards it as painful as death.

† The state when the object of love is not forgotten even for a moment, and separation from Him makes one as miserable as a fish out of water, is called Love.

‡ When there is total negation of egoism, mineness and attachment, and there is absolutely no thirst, wish, will, fancy and desire in any shape or form—it is called disinterestedness.

Use of the eyes in the study, in a disinterested spirit, properly scrutinizing the meaning and significance of every word and sentiment, of the *Gītā*, *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Bhāgavata* and other such elevating scriptures, wherein the divine Name, Form, Sports, Abode and their virtues, glory, truth and secret have been described and discussed; seeing the whole universe as God, seeing God's image, picture and sports etc., seeing the parents, friends, master, teacher, guest, saints and devotees etc., as the very same as God; and while doing so, getting horripilation, tears, choking of voice and delight in the heart, and feeling enchanted through love—this is worship and service of the above things through the eyes.

Reflection on what has been heard, studied and understood with regard to God's Name, Form, Sports, Abode, their virtue, glory, truth and secret etc., in a secluded and pure spot, sitting at ease in a steady posture, with faith and love, in a disinterested spirit, and with a mind endowed with discrimination and dispassion,* and mental offering of prayers, worship, adoration and obeisance etc., through psalms and songs; mental repetition of the above practises every moment,

* Analysis between what is true and false, what is eternal, and what is transient, is called discrimination. When this is properly developed, man reflects on God every moment, analysing and sifting the *Ātmā* from what is non-*Ātmā*, in every circumstance and every object.

'Dispassion' has been defined as follows by *Maharṣi Patañjali* in his *Yogadarśana*—

दृष्टानुश्रविकविषयवितृष्णस्य वशीकारसंज्ञा वैराग्यम्

(I. 15)

"The desireless state of the mind for objects of enjoyment of this world, e.g., wife, wealth, home, fame, prestige etc., as well as for celestial enjoyments, in the other world, is called Dispassion."

while going about, eating, drinking or engaged in any other activity; meditation on these at the time of going to sleep; meditation on God during waking hours, regarding every being as God, and going to sleep with this idea in the mind, and while doing so feeling quite absorbed forgetting even the consciousness of the body, and getting horripilation, tears, choking of voice, delight in the heart as well as stupefaction—these constitute worship of the above things through the mind.

Chanting of God's Name and chanting of the descriptions of God's Form, Sports, Abode and their virtue, glory, truth and secret, in sweet words, with reverence and love, and in disinterested spirit; giving dissertation on them before an audience; offering of prayers and praises to God through sacred psalms and songs; and cultivating the divine sentiment with reference to all, speaking to them in words which express good-will and truth, and are agreeable, sweet and soft, and while doing so getting horripilation, tears, choking of the voice, delight in the heart, and remain stupefied through intensity of love—these constitute worship of those things through the organ of speech.

Devoted practice on the lines stated above leads the Sādhaka to a direct realization of the Deity of his heart, in the very form in which he desires to realize God. At that time, his state becomes quite extraordinary, indeed; he gets stupefied out of intensity of love, joy and wonder; apart from God, he loses the consciousness of even his own existence; with a fixed gaze, he begins to see God and God alone; his eye-lids cease to quiver, and the direct vision and touch of God, and exchange of words with God, bring him horripilation, his voice gets choked, the eyes overflow with tears and words become heavy. His delight becomes unlimited, infinite. He

gets absorbed in supreme Bliss.* Wherever his eyes fall and mind goes, he sees God and God alone. God never becomes invisible to his eyes.† Seeing thus God in every object, he develops an extraordinary form of equanimity. He begins to look upon all things, ideas, incidents, actions, circumstances and beings with a wonderful eye of equality.‡ He comes to know in reality, and in truth, what God, the Supreme Brahma, is, and what is His glory, in all His aspects—possessed of

* When under Kāṁsa's order, Śrī Akrūra went to Gokula to invite Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma to Mathurā, his condition at the direct sight of God is described by the Bhāgavata as follows—

भगवदर्शनाह्नादबाष्पर्यकुलेक्षणः ।
पुलकाचिताङ्गं औत्कण्ठयात् स्वाख्याने नाशकनृप ॥

(X.38/35)

“O King, the joy of the direct sight of God brought overflowing tears to his eyes, his body got swollen through horripilation, and the voice having choked, he could not even properly introduce himself.”

† The Lord said—

यो मां पश्यति सर्वत्र सर्वं च मयि पश्यति ।
तस्याहं न प्रणश्यामि स च मे न प्रणश्यति ॥

(Gītā VI. 30)

“He who sees Me (the Universal Self) present in all beings, and sees all beings existing in Me, I am never out of sight of him, nor is he ever out of sight of Me.”

‡ Describing the marks of devotees, the Lord said—

समः	शत्रौ	च	मित्रे	च	तथा	मानापमानयोः ।
शीतोष्णसुखदुःखेषु			समः		सङ्गविवर्जितः ॥	
तुल्यनिन्दास्तुतिमौनी			संतुष्टो		येन केनचित् ।	
अनिकेतः			स्थिरमतिर्भक्तिमान्मे		प्रियो नरः ॥	

(Gītā XII. 18-19)

“He who is alike to friend and foe, and likewise to honour and ignominy who is alike to heat and cold, pleasure and pain etc., and is free from attachment. He who takes praise and reproach alike, who is given to contemplation and content with whatever comes unasked for, without attachment to home, fixed in mind and full of devotion to Me, that man is dear to Me.”

attributes and attributeless, possessed of form and formless, manifest and unmanifest. He, then, gets totally freed, for all time, from every form of doubt, error, ignorance and sin. For him no duty is left, and there is nothing more to be known. He remains constantly absorbed in God. Whatever he does takes place in God alone. The Lord said—

सर्वभूतस्थितं यो मां भजत्येकत्वमास्थितः ।
सर्वथा वर्तमानोऽपि स योगी मयि वर्तते ॥

(Gītā VI. 31)

“He who, established in unity, worships Me as residing in all beings (as their very Self), that Yogī, though engaged in all forms of activities, dwells in Me.”

The sight, speech, touch, thought and conversation of such a saintly soul confers sanctity on all. Offering the homage of his heart to Śrī Śukadeva, Parīksit said in the Bhāgavata—

येषां संस्मरणात्पुंसां सद्यः शुद्ध्यन्ति वै गृहाः ।
किं पुनर्दर्शनस्पर्शपादशौचासनादिभिः ॥
सांनिध्यात्ते महायोगिन् पातकानि महान्त्यपि ।
सद्यो नश्यन्ति वै पुंसां विष्णोरिव सुरेतराः ॥

(I.19. 33-34)

“O sage ! Your very remembrance purifies a household. What have we not gained when we got this opportunity of your sight and touch and of your service in the form of washing of feet and offering of a seat etc.? O chief of Yogīs, your very presence destroys even the greatest of sins, even as demons disappear in the presence of Bhagavān Viṣṇu.”

The very atmosphere of the place, where such a saint resides, becomes sacred. Devarṣi Nārada says—

तीर्थीकुर्वन्ति तीर्थानि सुकर्मीकुर्वन्ति कर्माणि सच्छास्त्रीकुर्वन्ति शास्त्राणि ।

(Bhakti-Sūtra 69)

“He confers sacredness on sacred places, makes all deeds virtuous and all scriptures uplifting scriptures.”

That is wherever he resides becomes a sacred place, or his residence in a sacred place makes the sanctity of the place permanent and bright; whatever deeds he performs become the standard of virtue; his very words are scriptures, and whatever books are treated as authority by him are regarded as the highest scriptures.

कुलं पवित्रं जननी कृतार्था वसुन्धरा पुण्यवती च तेन ।
अपारसंवित्सुखसागरेऽस्मिंमल्लीनं परे ब्रह्मणि यस्य चेतः ॥

(Skanda, Māheśvara Kaumārikakhaṇḍa. 45, 140)

“He whose heart gets merged in that infinite knowledge, the ocean of Bliss, the Supreme Brahma, his family line gets sanctified, his mother’s object of existence is fulfilled, and the earth itself attains purity through him.”

The poet-sage, Śrī Tulasīdāsajī, went so far as to say—

मोरें मन प्रभु अस बिस्वासा ।
राम ते अधिक राम कर दासा ॥

“Lord ! it is my belief that the servant (devotee) of Rāma is greater than Rāma Himself.”

Therefore, man’s duty is that in order to attain this state he should constantly worship the Divine Name, Form, Sports, Abode, their virtue, glory, truth and secret as stated above, through the ear, eye, mind and speech, with faith and reverence, and in a disinterested spirit.



The Best Use of Time

Man should never waste a moment of his time. He should treat indolence, error, sense-enjoyment, sinful act and improper sleep as injurious as poison, and wholly renounce them. The object of the valuable human life is never to waste time over them. Delay in the performance of a proper action is called 'indolence.' Neglect of a duty enjoined by the scriptures and useless efforts of the mind, speech and body are called 'error.' Indulgences in taste and luxury, pursuit of physical comfort, use of costly things, and enjoyment of pleasure with worldly objects, are called 'sense-enjoyment.' Practices of falsehood, hypocrisy, theft, adultery and violence are 'sin', and indulgence in sleep for more than six hours is 'improper sleep'. One who is anxious for his spiritual good should avoid them as far as possible and should devote the entire time at his disposal to spiritual endeavour, and without wasting a moment should tuck up his sleeves for spiritual practice till there is life in the body.

A man of good understanding should make it a point to devote all the time at his disposal to the performance of some action. He should never lose a moment idly, and the action he undertakes should be, again, of the highest type. Action which is sanctioned by the scriptures, and approved by reasoning is proper action. The Lord says in the *Gītā*—

युक्ताहारविहारस्य युक्तचेष्टस्य कर्मसु ।
युक्तस्वज्ञावबोधस्य योगो भवति दुःखहा ॥

(VI. 17)

"Yoga, which rids one of woe, is accomplished only by

him who is regulated in diet and recreation, regulated in performing actions, and regulated in sleeping and waking."

The purpose of this is to say that we possess twenty-four hours in the course of the day and night; out of this six hours should be spent in sleep, and another six hours should be devoted to the practice of Yoga for the sake of God-realization. Three hours in the morning, and three in the evening should be set apart for this work. The remaining twelve hours should be devoted to performance of action by the mind, senses and body, and sanctioned by the scriptures, out of which six should be set apart for the earning of livelihood by proper means and six for the requirements of health, such as attending to nature's calls, bath, breakfast, lunch, dinner, supper etc., and physical exercise. In case the work of livelihood requires more time than stated above, eight hours may be apportioned to it and the remaining four may be spent in looking after the requirements of health.

After thus generally dividing the hours of the day, one should make out a detailed programme of work suited to one's environment, time, *Varna*, *Āśrama* and other circumstances and conveniences. Ordinarily speaking, the following programme may be adopted—

Retiring to bed at 10 o'clock in the night, one should get up at 4 in the morning. He should remember God immediately on waking, and keeping up the same remembrance devote one hour from 4 to 5 to work of cleanliness, bath, physical exercise etc. 5 to 8A.M. should be devoted to the performance of *Sandhyā* and practices of *Gāyatrī*, meditation, *Japa* of the Divine Name, worship of God and study of scriptures like the *Śruti*, *Smṛti*, *Gītā*, *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Bhāgavata* etc., analysing with care and discrimination the teachings embodied in those sacred books. The two hours between 8 and 10 may be devoted to the requirements of health, taking

of food etc., and 10 to 4 P.M. should be devoted to work of legitimate earning. 4 to 5 P.M. should be spent in walk and exercise for the maintenance of health, evacuation, bath, etc., and 5 to 8 P.M. should be devoted again to the performance of Sandhyā, practices of Gāyatrī, meditation, Japa of the Divine Name, worship of God and study of scriptures like the Śruti, Smṛti, Gītā, Rāmāyaṇa and Bhāgavata etc., understanding and appreciating their teachings. 8 to 10 P.M. may be set apart for dinner, talks with friends, important consultations and Satsaṅga etc. Thus the twenty-four hours of the day and night may be divided. Alterations may be made in this programme according to the convenience of every individual, but remembrance of the Name and Form of God should be constantly maintained, for that is the only means by which God may be easily realized. The Lord has said in the Gītā that he who always and constantly remembers Him with undivided mind, to that Yogi always absorbed in Him, He is easily attainable—

अनन्यचेतः सततं यो मां स्मरति नित्यशः ।
तस्याहं सुलभः पार्थ नित्ययुक्तस्य योगिनः ॥

(VIII.14)

If it is argued that remembrance of the Name and Form of God is not possible while one is engaged in worldly activities, the statement should be treated as incorrect; for the Lord said—

तस्मात्सर्वेषु कालेषु मामनुस्मर युध्य च ।
मव्यपितमनोबुद्धिमर्मेवैव्यस्यसंशयम् ॥

(VIII. 7)

“Therefore, Arjuna, think of Me at all times and fight. With mind and reason thus surrendered to Me, you will doubtless come to Me.”

When remembrance of God may be maintained even

while engaged in a fight, it should not be impossible to retain it when engaged in other activities of the world. Had it been really impossible, the Lord would never have commanded Arjuna to do so. If you say that you cannot practise it, the reason lies in the deficiency of practice carried on with adequate faith and love. For the growth of faith and love, one should understand the truth and secret of the Divine Name, Form, sports, abode, virtues and glory, and offer prayers and supplications to the Lord. Effort should also be unremittingly made with the help of both discrimination and dispassion, that remembrance of the Name and Form of God may be constantly maintained. The association of saintly souls is specially beneficial in this respect. Therefore, such association should be scrupulously cultivated. In the absence of a saintly soul, the association of a Sādhaka following sincerely the path of God should be regarded as Satsaṅga, and in his absence the study of spiritual literature also may be treated as Satsaṅga.

If man properly uses his time with discrimination, he can, indeed, deliver his soul within a short time. There is no work which is beyond man's performance. In this world, there is nothing which a man cannot successfully achieve through his own exertion. Then, what is there to say if one who depends on the grace of God should succeed in attaining the highest goal of life in the form of God-realization !

Care should be taken that remembrance of God's Name and Form may be kept unbroken all the twenty-four hours of the day and night and the remembrance should also be of a very high order. Japa of the Divine Name, in rhythm with the breath, is superior to Japa through the tongue, and mental Japa is still superior. If, again, such Japa is joined with remembrance of the Divine Form, which stands for the significance of the Name its value is still more enhanced.

Moreover, if it is performed with faith and love in a disinterested spirit, what more need be said about it ? God, the embodiment of Existence, Sentience and Bliss, like the ether, is equally pervasive everywhere; that very formless, attributeless God manifests Himself with attributes for the sake of His devotees. Therefore, whatever aspect of God is meditated upon—formless or with form, attributeless or with attributes—all lead to spiritual good. But if the remembrance is performed understanding the truth, secret, virtue and glory of the various aspects of God stated above, it should be treated as of the highest order.

In this world, the majority of men generally waste their time uselessly, and if some of them form in their mind the picture of a goal as the highest ideal, they cannot actually follow it in their daily lives. The primary cause of this no doubt lies in worldly attachment, ignorance and deficiency of faith and love, but in addition to this, there is sluggishness of effort as well. That is why they fail to reach the goal. Therefore, in order to reach the goal, the best use of time should be made, constantly practising remembrance of God; then, through the grace of God, it may be possible easily to reach the goal.

As a means of keeping up remembrance of God all the twenty-four hours, three general divisions of time should be made as stated above, viz., six hours for religious practices, twelve hours for activities in the world, and six hours for sleep, and it should be put to the best use in the following manner:

(1) Whatever spiritual practices man may regularly follow every morning and evening do not generally reach a high standard of perfection, because he does not practise them with his whole mind, cultivating the proper attitude and sentiment. Outwardly the body performs some acts, but the

mind dwells elsewhere. This should be prevented at all costs. At the time of spiritual practice, the co-operation of the mind is indispensable. For instance, while performing Sandhyā, attention should be devoted to every rule and the meaning of the sacred formula, keeping in mind the seers of the several Mantras, their Chandas, presiding deities and aim or purpose. The Gāyatrī is a powerful formula; it contains praise of the Lord, meditation and prayer. Hence, during the Japa of the Gāyatrī, the mind should be devoted to contemplation of its meaning. If this is not possible, at least meditation on God should be practised as an indispensable factor during the Japa of Gāyatrī. Similarly, the Gītā, Rāmāyaṇa, Bhāgavata and other scriptures should be recited during daily readings, keeping the mind focussed on their meaning. While offering worship to God, either through an image or through a mental form, the rules of worship should be followed with faith and love, remembering God's true form, virtues and glory. On account of deficiency in the knowledge of the scriptures, if there is failure in the strict observance of a rule, no real harm will accrue; but there should be no deficiency in faith and love. Whatever formula or Divine Name is taken up for Japa, its value should be spiritually raised higher and higher through the cultivation of a high sentiment and deep concentration of the mind. And during meditation, there should be such total forgetfulness of the world that except the presence of God, there should remain no consciousness either of the world or of the meditator himself.

Whatever time we may regularly spend every morning and evening in the pursuit of spiritual discipline, if we really devote the same in the manner as stated above, we may gain in the course of six months, what cannot be gained even in fifty years of desultory practice. When we sit for our daily spiritual practice, every moment of that period

should be spent in the practice and practice alone. If we do not make the time allotted for practice as full of the spirit of worship, or do not even make an earnest effort to do so, it will be difficult for us to carry on other duties during other periods of the day with constant remembrance of God in our heart. Therefore, we should tuck up our sleeves and make a serious effort in this direction. One should find out what are the difficulties which stand in the way of proper absorption of the mind in spiritual practice even during the period allotted for the purpose, and what time uselessly flies away, and there is no improvement even after serious effort. If the clue to this is discovered, attempt should be made to remove the difficulties as speedily as possible. The mind should be expostulated in the following words: "If you do not lend your co-operation even in this act of supreme good, the effect will be extremely terrible for you. You should attend to this work, even neglecting a thousand other duties. Indeed, none but you can carry this out. You should not care even if there are losses in other works as compared to this; for they can be carried out even when you are absent, or other agents can undertake them. But the work of your spiritual good can never be done by others." If after this argument, the wicked and perverted mind proceeds to point out the necessity of other works, you should impress on it again that there is no work, no duty, which is superior to, or more important than this.

(2) Not a single moment of life should be spent in idleness, error, enjoyment, sinful conduct and improper sleep. All activities—social, religious, earning of livelihood and attending to physical need etc.—should follow the injunctions of the scriptures and should be right and proper according to the dictates of reason. Every act should be governed by the disinterested spirit, and should be done as

an act of offering to God, or as service to God. When done in this spirit, getting liberated from all forms of bondage, man may, indeed, realize God. The Lord said in the *Gītā*—

यत्करोषि यदशनासि यज्जुहोषि ददासि यत्।
 यत्तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत्कुरुष्व मदर्पणम्॥
 शुभाशुभफलैरेवं मोक्ष्यसे कर्मबन्धनैः।
 संन्यासयोगयुक्तात्मा विमुक्तो मामुपैष्यसि॥

(IX. 27-28)

“Arjuna, whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer as oblation to the sacred fire, whatever you bestow as a gift, whatever you do by way of penance, offer it all to Me. With your mind thus established in the Yoga of Renunciation, you will be freed from the bonds of Karma in the shape of good and evil consequences; and freed from them, you shall attain Me.”

When all our acts begin to take place under God's inspiration, or according to the command of God, without the taint of the ego and in a disinterested spirit, carrying the process of remembrance of God within the heart, then it may be presumed that our acts are being done as offerings to God. And acts which are done for God-realization, or for the pleasure of God, or with the object of carrying out the command of God, with remembrance of God and in a disinterested spirit, are called acts done for the sake of God. When the entire time at our disposal goes to be spent in this spirit, it should be regarded as indicative of a very high state of spiritual existence. If man so desires, he can, provided he makes the effort, through God's grace, spend the entire time of activities in this manner, then what to speak of spending thus only twelve hours of time! Depending on God, and remembering His Name and Form, if man constantly attempts to do his acts, he may, through God's grace, attain the eternal, imperishable state. The Lord says in the *Gītā*—

सर्वकर्मण्यपि सदा कुर्वणो मद्व्यपाश्रयः ।
मत्प्रसादादवाज्ञोति शाश्वतं पदमव्ययम् ॥

(XVIII. 56)

For the reform of the period allotted to activities of the world, two things should be particularly attended to—

(a) In every act, selfishness should be renounced, disinterestedly, and (b) remembrance of the Name and Form of God should be practised. All this is achieved through Dispassion and Practice. Dispassion leads to the growth of the disinterested spirit and intense practice contributes to the constant remembrance of God's Name and Form.

We should, therefore, for the attainment of our spiritual objective, take to the practice of our discipline, with faith and love, surrendering ourselves to God. When we do so, we may indeed quickly attain success through the grace of God.

(3) While the periods allotted to spiritual practice and worldly activities are to a certain extent utilized, in most cases, the period allotted to sleep is totally idly spent, due to lack of understanding. In the state of sleep, a man generally dreams whatever thoughts pass through his mind when he is about to fall to sleep—the strength of these thoughts give distinct forms to them, and makes them appear as incidents truly taking place before the eyes. The whole night is thus uselessly spent in an insubstantial world. With the help of Dispassion and Practice, one can, however, bring about the reform of this period. Before going to sleep, we should devote at least fifteen minutes to the purification of thought by driving out the thought of the world, regarding the latter as transient, perishable, frail and the very source of misery and filling up the mind instead with the thought of any aspect of God, suited to the taste and inclination of the Sādhaka—formless or with form, attributeless or with

attributes or reflecting on the virtues, glory and sports of any of the divine incarnations like Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Śrī Rāma etc. This habit may be easily formed within a few days, if the Sādhaka makes a serious attempt to do so with the help of discrimination and dispassion. And this habit once strongly formed will lead to the presence of nothing but divine thoughts in the dream state, and accordingly, therefore, the Sādhaka will see in his dream only sights connected with the Lord's Name, sports, Form, virtues and glory. Thus the dream state will be transformed into one of spiritual discipline. Hence it will be an essential part of one's spiritual life.

Every moment of human life is valuable. How can one who has understood this secret idly waste even a moment? Man does not realize the need for liberation from bondage because of the lack of faith in the other world and God, and want of understanding of the true glory of God-realization. That is why he thoughtlessly throws away the valuable time of human existence in pursuit of the blind desire for worldly happiness, little realizing the truth that in comparison with the bliss of God-realization the total combined happiness of the world in all its forms would not be equal to a drop of water in the ocean. Just as the stars shine in a portion of the infinite sky, even so the entire universe lies only in a part of God. If the Jīva succeeds in gaining the total happiness of the world, it will be nothing but a feeble reflection of a part of the bliss of Brahma. And that reflection also, in reality, is experienced because of its connection with God, the embodiment of Existence, Sentience and Bliss. Therefore, man should devote his entire time to the realization of that infinite Bliss viz., God. This is the best use of time, and herein lies the fulfilment of human existence.

Bharata and the Nine Types of Devotion

The nine types of Devotion mentioned in Śrīmad Bhāgavata stood illustrated in the life of Prahlāda. When his father, Hiranyakāśipu, asked him to repeat what he considered to be the best of all the lessons he had received from his preceptor till then, Prahlāda gave the following reply:—

“(1) Hearing the names, description, virtues and glory etc., of Bhagavān Viṣṇu, (2) singing them and (3) mentally dwelling on the same, (4) adoration of His feet, (5) offering worship to Him, (6) making to Him obeisance, (7) regarding oneself as His servant, (8) treating Him as a friend and (9) offering one’s whole being to Him—these are the nine types of Devotion. If a man cultivates this ninefold devotion towards Bhagavān Viṣṇu, I consider it to be the best study” (Śrīmad Bhāgavata VII. v. 23-24).

All the nine types of Devotion referred to above are found exemplified in Bharata, the supreme lover and exclusive devotee of Śrī Rāma. He was a man of ideal character, was possessed of noble qualities, wisdom, dispassion and self-abnegation and an exclusive, sincere and disinterested lover and devotee of the Lord. Tulasīdāsa in his Rāmacaritamānasa has unreservedly sung his glory in several places. If a man possesses the slightest tinge of devotion and love in him his heart gets choked with emotion and tears begin to flow from his eyes when he reads passages from the Rāmacaritamānasa depicting Bharata’s character.

While speaking of Bharata's greatness Tulasīdāsa himself says—

“Bharata's love at that time was more than Śeṣa (the thousand-headed serpent-king) could describe. It is as unapproachable to the poet as the bliss of absorption into the Absolute to those who are tainted by egotism and mineness.”

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“Bharata's affection, courtesy, modesty and nobility were delightful to hear but difficult to describe.”

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“All great poets hesitate to portray the mode of living, the creed, the doings, the devotion, the dispassion, the stainless virtues and splendour of Bharata; they baffle the wits of even Śeṣa, Ganeśa (the elephant-headed God of wisdom) and Sarasvatī (the Goddess of speech).”

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“If Bharata, who brimmed over with the nectar of devotion to Sītā and Śrī Rāma, had never been born, who would have practised the difficult vow of self-abnegation and austerity and control of the mind and senses, that transcended the imagination even of sages? Who would have dispelled the woes, burning agony, poverty, hypocrisy and other evils of the world through his fair renown, and who in this Kali age would have forcibly diverted the mind of villains like Tulasīdāsa towards Śrī Rāma?”

Janaka for one was simply enraptured to see Bharata's character, virtues, devotion and love. While at Citrakūṭa he spoke to his wife, queen Sunayanā, in the following strain—

“Listen attentively, O fair-faced and bright-eyed lady : the story of Bharata loosens the bonds of worldly existence. Religion, state-craft and an enquiry about Brahma (the

Infinite) are domains to which I have some access according to my own poor lights. But, though acquainted with these subjects, my wits cannot touch the shadow of Bharata's glory even by trick, much less describe it. To Brahmā (the Creator), Lord Gaṇapati (Gaṇeśa), Śeṣa, Lord Śiva, Śāradā (Goddess Sarasvatī), seers, sages and wise men and others who are clever in judgment, the story, fame, doings, piety, amiability, goodness and unsullied glory of Bharata are delightful to hear and appreciate. They surpass the celestial stream in purity and even nectar in taste..."

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"Listen, O beloved queen, Bharata's inestimable glory is known to Śrī Rāma alone; but He too cannot describe it."

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"But the mutual affection and confidence, O good lady, of Bharata and Śrī Rāma (the chief of Raghus) are beyond one's conception. Even though Śrī Rāma is the highest example of even-mindedness, Bharata is the perfection of love and attachment. Bharata has never bestowed any thought on his spiritual or worldly interests or personal comforts. Devotion to Śrī Rāma's feet is at once the means and the end: to my mind this appears to sum up Bharata's creed....."

Bharata was an unfathomable ocean of loving devotion or rather a veritable embodiment of love. Wherever we come across a portrayal of Bharata, we find an ocean of love rising before us. Besides this he rivalled in noble qualities and ideal character as well. Śrī Rāma Himself was filled with rapture to see his ideal virtues, noble character, amiable disposition and love. He says in Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa—

"Dear Bharata, you are an upholder of righteousness,

well-versed in secular lore as well as in the Vedas and adept in love."

"Pure in thought, word and deed, you are your sole compeer, dear brother. In this assembly of elders and in such adverse circumstances how can I recount the virtues of a younger brother?...."

Bharata's greatness cannot be adequately described. The whole of Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa is replete with his glory. We have only briefly indicated it in the present article. We have refrained from quoting more passages lest the article may assume undue proportions.

Now we proceed to indicate below, on the testimony of passages from the Mahābhārata, the Padmapurāṇa, the Rāmāyaṇa and other works, how the aforesaid nine types of Devotion are illustrated in Bharata's life.

(1) Śravana-Bhakti

This consists in hearing with reverence and love nectar-like discourses centring round the name, form, virtues, glory, pastimes, truth and mysteries of the Lord and getting absorbed in love on hearing them.

The above characteristics are directly perceived in Bharata. He was filled with rapture when he heard of the Lord's virtues, exploits, love and glory. When Hanumān called on him at Nandigrāma in order to apprise him of the Lord's triumphant return and Bharata heard this welcome news from Hanumān's lips, he had a most wonderful experience.

Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa describes his condition as follows—

"The moment he heard Hanumān's words he forgot all his woes as a thirsty man who has succeeded in laying his hands on nectar."

The affection with which he embraced Hanumān was too great for his heart to contain; his eyes streamed with tears and a thrill ran through his body. “Hanumān, at the sight of you all my sorrows are gone: (it seems as if) my beloved Rāma Himself has met me today.” Again and again he enquired about Śrī Rāma’s health. “Listen, brother: what shall I give you (in return for this happy tidings)? I have pondered within me; but I find that there is nothing (no treasure) in this world that can match this news in value. I can never repay your debt, dear brother; now narrate to me the doings of my Lord (Śrī Rāma).” Thereupon Hanumān bowed his head at Bharata’s feet and recounted all the virtues of Śrī Rāma (the Lord of Raghus).

In the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki Bharata says to Hanumān—

“Many years have passed since my lord left for that great forest (Daṇḍaka). It is only today that I hear his delightful news” (Yuddhakāṇḍa 126.1).

In the Adhyātma-Rāmāyaṇa (forming part of the Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa) too we come across a similar passage with a slight variation. It further tells us—

“Thus urged by the high-souled Bharata, Hanumān then narrated all the exploits of Śrī Rāma one after another and Bharata was supremely delighted to hear of the same from the lips of Hanumān (the son of wind-god)” (Yuddhakāṇḍa XIV. 65-66).

The great sage Vālmīki portrays Bharata’s reaction at that moment as below—

Now Bharata was much pleased to hear Hanumān’s agreeable words. Joining his palms he spoke in soul ravishing accents—“My long-cherished desire has been fulfilled today!” (Yuddhakāṇḍa 126.55)

After Śrī Rāma’s coronation when all the four brothers

began to live happily in Ayodhyā, Bharata and Śatrughna would hear Śrī Rāma's praises from Hanumān's lips each time they went out with him to a grove. The episode explicitly shows their extreme fondness for hearing His stories and their feeling of joy, ecstasy etc., resulting therefrom. Says Tulasīdāsa—

“Bharata and Śatrughna, the two brothers, would take Hanumān to some grove, where they would sit down and ask him all about Śrī Rāma's virtues, and he would enlighten them out of the depth of his wisdom. They would be much gratified to hear of the Lord's stainless virtues and would implore him to recount them again and again.”

(2) Kīrtana-Bhakti

This consists in uttering with reverence and love the Lord's names and describing His beauty, virtues, glory, exploits, truth and mysteries, with a body thrilling with joy, a voice choked with emotion, eyes streaming with tears, heart gladdened with delight and soul filled with rapture.

The above characteristics too are found in Bharata. When he reached Śringaverapura and encamped on the bank of the Gaṅgā, Guha approached him and saw him squatting with his younger brother (Śatrughna) and his ministers, with a hue dark as the cloud, clad in rags and wearing a crown of tufted hair, thinking of Rāma and Rāma alone and repeating His name. Touching the ground with his head Guha bowed to him and apprised him of his name (Adhyātma-Rāmāyaṇa, Ayodhyākāṇḍa. VIII. 20-21).

After that when Bharata moved to Prayāga (the modern Allahabad), he repeated the Lord's name and chanted His praises all the way. Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa says—

“Bharata entered the limits of Prayāga (the area surrounding the confluence of the Gaṅgā and Yamunā) in

the afternoon : overflowing with love he cried, “Rāma, Sītā”, “Rāma, Sītā !” even as he went.”

When Bharata stayed at Nandigrāma suffering the pangs of separation from the Lord, he led the life of a hermit. Absorbed in love he would repeat His name and recount His nectarous virtues and exploits. We read in the Rāmacaritamānasa—

“His body thrilling all over (with emotion) and heart full of Sītā and Śrī Rāma, his tongue repeated Śrī Rāma’s name and tears flowed from his eyes.”

The Pātālakhanda of the Padmapurāṇa, also tells us :

“While at Nandigrāma, Bharata slept in a hole dug underground. He observed a vow of continence, wore matted hair on his head and covered his body with the bark of trees. He had grown emaciated in body and felt much afflicted with the agony of separation from Śrī Rāma while repeating His stories” (I.30).

According to the Padmapurāṇa, when Hanumān called on Bharata at Nandigrāma, he found the latter “repeating to his old ministers the stories of Śrī Rāma, surcharged with the nectar of His lotus-feet” (Ibid. II. 12).

Hanumān too could not contain himself for joy when he saw Bharata overpowered by the agony of separation from Śrī Rāma and repeating the Lord’s name, and found him severely abstinent and emaciated by self-mortification. Hanumān’s reactions at the moment have been portrayed by Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa as follows—

“Hanumān saw Bharata seated on a mat of Kuśa grass, with a tuft of matted hair for a crown, his body wasted away, his lips muttering, “Rāma, Rāma, Raghupati” and his lotus-eyes streaming with tears. Hanumān felt overjoyed at this sight; every hair on his body stood erect and tears rained from

his eyes. Gratified at heart in everyway, he addressed him in words that were sweet to the ear as nectar : "He in whose absence you have been pining night and day and the catalogue of whose virtues you have been incessantly reciting, that ornament of Raghu's race, the delighter of the virtuous, the deliverer of gods and hermits, has safely arrived."

In this way we come across charming references to Bharata muttering the Lord's name and uttering His praises. We too shall be well-advised to follow in the footsteps of that great lover and devotee of the Lord and lovingly mutter the Lord's name, repeat His stories and utter His praises even as Bharata did.

(3) Smarana-Bhakti

Smarana-Bhakti consists in lovingly meditating on the name, beauty, virtues, glory, exploits, truth and mysteries of the Lord till one gets absorbed in His being. The above characteristics too are found exemplified in Bharata. It was a habit with him to think of the Lord every now and then. He was constantly and particularly engaged in the thought of the wonderfully charming and graceful form of Bhagavān, Śrī Rāma, the repository of all virtues. He thought of the Lord not only while he lived in Ayodhyā (prior to Śrī Rāma's exile), but he had his thoughts fixed on the Lord even as he proceeded on his journey to Citrakūṭa in order to persuade Śrī Rāma to return to Ayodhyā. At Citrakūṭa, of course, he was ever in the presence of the Lord enjoying His sight. Again on his return journey from Citrakūṭa to Ayodhyā he kept meditating all the way on the virtues, exploits and beauty of the Lord. And on settling down at Nandigrāma, he unquestionably devoted most of his time to the thought of the Lord.

In the *Adhyātma-Rāmāyaṇa* while depicting the days of Bharata's stay in Ayodhyā the author says:—

“During the short period Bharata was there in his own palace with his preceptor Vasiṣṭha, and his younger brother, Śatrughna, and attended upon by the counsellors, his heart ever remained saturated with the thought of Śrī Rāma” (Ayodhyākāṇḍa VII. 113).

On approaching Citrakūṭa Bharata is portrayed as below—

“With his heart overbrimming with the nectar of his weird love, his mind absorbed in the thought of the Lord of Raghus and bosom drenched with tears of love, Bharata languidly entered the precincts of Śrī Hari’s hermitage” (Ibid. IX.4).

Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa says—

“The sages and other Brāhmaṇas, the Guru Vasiṣṭha, Bharata and King Janaka:—the whole host was perturbed on account of their parting with Śrī Rāma. Ruminating upon the numerous virtues of the Lord all went their way in utter silence.”

During his stay at Nandigrāma Bharata once addressed his ministers thus—

“O wise ministers, this opportunity has come to me, unfortunate as I am, to expiate my sins. I will, therefore, absolve myself of all the sins by constantly applying my mind to the lotus-feet of Śrī Rāma with reverence” (Padmapurāṇa-Pātālakāṇḍa I. 40).

Hanumān goes there and sees him as under—

“Ever meditating on the form of Bhagavān Rāma, Bharata lived in his hut. He wore a tuft of matted locks and put on the bark of trees as his garment and had his food consisting of roots and fruits; his body grew grimy making him look most miserable and emaciated” (Adhyātma-Rāmāyaṇa-Yuddhakāṇḍa XIV. 51-52, 55).

While frequently revolving in his mind on the virtues, characteristics and glory of the Lord, Bharata, at Nandigrāma, used to get lost in the pangs of separation from Him. All the same, he had implicit faith in the infallible kindness of the Lord and felt sure that He would undoubtedly come to meet him. That kept him eagerly waiting for the Lord every moment. The delay, of course, in seeing Śrī Rāma again was intolerable for him and therefore, being plunged in this agony of separation from the Lord, Bharata mentally wept a pathetic plaint. In this connection Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa has most beautifully depicted his ways—

“Bharata’s right eye and arm throbbed again and again. Perceiving this as a good omen he felt much glad at heart and began to ponder: Only one day more and the time-limit on which banks my very existence will expire; as I think of it my mind is filled with boundless anxiety. How is it that my Lord has not returned? Has He put me out of His mind recognizing my evil nature? Ah! How blessed and fortunate is Laksmaṇa who is devoted to the lotus-feet of Śrī Rāma! The Lord knew me to be cunning and crooked and therefore did not take me with Him. If the Lord were to consider my doings, there would be no chance for my redemption even in a hundred million cycles. But the Lord takes no notice of the offence of His servants; He is a friend of the distressed and most tender-hearted. I feel strongly confident at heart that my Lord will come; for the omens are so favourable. If my life continues a moment after the expiry of the appointed time who shall be more wretched than myself in the world?”

While Bharata’s mind was thus sinking deep in the sea of separation from Rāma, the son of the wind-god, disguised as a Brāhmaṇa, arrived there like a bark (as if to rescue him).

It is noteworthy how during his separation from Śrī Rāma Bharata spends his time expecting and awaiting Him every moment and fixing his thought on the Lord's virtues and His disposition.

(4) Pādasevana-Bhakti

This comprises lovingly serving, worshipping, meditation on, and gazing at either the beautiful feet or the dust thereof or the wooden sandals, a metal, stone or clay image or picture or mental image of the blessed and divine Lord.

All these traits too find place in Bharata. He is, indeed, the apostle of this type of Devotion called Pādasevana-Bhakti. Although Lakṣmī unswervingly remains engaged in serving the lotus-feet of Bhagavān, yet it is Bharata who holds before us the ideal of adoring His wooden sandals as no other than His very feet. Besides, the degree of reverence which he possessed towards the dust from the Lord's feet we do not come across anywhere in the pre-Vālmīki era.

His uninterrupted devotion to the Lord's lotus-feet and intense longing to see and serve them were extremely wonderful and commendable. Throughout Bharata's journey from Ayodhyā to Citrakūṭa wherever he came across the dust-print of the Lord's feet he stopped and applied the dust therefrom on his head and eyes with all honour and respect, love and devotion and went into ecstasy. He had no other desire than to serve the lotus-feet of the Lord when he implored Śrī Rāma to return to Ayodhyā. And when the Lord refused to comply with his entreaties on any condition Bharata begged of Him, His wooden sandals for doing service as it were to His own feet; his reverence for the Lord's feet became all the more eloquent when he placed on his head the sandals bestowed by Him, and over and above he made them the very prop of his existence till the

expiry of Śrī Rāma's exile. On his return from Citrakūṭa to Ayodhyā he kept his mind centred on them and likewise while making for Nandigrāma. There he duly installed them on the throne and always referred to them in discharging the royal duties. His whole being revolved round the sandals and he worshipped them with the utmost devotion and love. The Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa and the Adhyātma-Rāmāyaṇa go to tell us that when Śrī Rāma returned to His kingdom, Ayodhyā, Bharata approached Him with His sandals on his head. All glory to this Devotion of Bharata to the lotus-feet of the Lord.

Bharata says—

"I shall have no peace of mind until I see my elder brother's feet having thereunder marks worthy of a sovereign" (Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa, Ayodhyākāṇḍa 99.9).

In the Rāmacaritamānasa it is stated—

"He (Bharata) placed the dust of Śrī Rāma's footprints on his eyes with an ecstasy of love which transcends all expression."

Again—

"He was as delighted to behold Śrī Rāma's footprints as a pauper who happens to lay his hands on a philosopher's stone. Placing the dust on his head and heart he applied it to his eyes as well as he experienced the joy he would have on seeing the Lord of Raghus Himself. Perceiving Bharata's condition, which transcends description, beasts and birds and even inanimate creatures were overwhelmed with emotion."

The Adhyātma-Rāmāyaṇa says—

"Bharata saw all-around there Śrī Rāma's footprints adorned with the marks of a thunderbolt, goad, lotus and flag etc., and which were auspicious for the earth. With his younger brother, Śatruघna, he began to roll in the dust,

hallowed by Śrī Rāma's feet, and said to himself "Oh, how blessed I am today to have beheld the earth beautifully spotted with Śrī Rāma's footprints, the dust of whose feet is sought after even by Brahmā (the Creator) and all the other gods and the Vedas!" (Ayodhyākāṇḍa IX. 2-3)

On the Lord's refusing to return to Ayodhyā against the importunities made by Bharata at Citrakūṭa, he poured out the following words—

"O noble one, be pleased to place Your feet on these sandals ornamented with gold. These two will look after the welfare of all the world. O hero, delight of the Raghus and vanquisher of enemies, for fourteen years, wearing matted hair and bark garments, and living on roots and fruits only, I will await Your arrival residing in the outskirts of the city and leaving the affairs of sovereignty to the care of Your sandals. O best of Raghus, if on the first day after the expiry of fourteen years I do not see You, I will forthwith enter the fire" (Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa, Ayodhyākāṇḍa 112.21, 23, 26).

In the *Adhyātma-Rāmāyaṇa* also Bharata says—

"O best among sovereigns, confer on me Your universally adored sandals to carry on the administration of the State." Saying this he placed a pair of divine sandals under His feet. Recognizing Bharata's devotion to Him, Śrī Rāma bestowed them upon him. Receiving those bejewelled sandals Bharata paced round Him in reverence and repeatedly made obeisance at His feet; he then spoke in choked accents— "O Lord Rāma, if on the first day after the termination of fourteen years, You do not return to Ayodhyā I will enter a huge fire" (Ayodhyākāṇḍa IX. 49—53).

Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa observes—

"The Lord took compassion on him and gave him His sandals which Bharata reverently placed on his head."

The Mahābhārata tells us—

“On being sent back by Śrī Rāma, who was faithful to His father’s words, Bharata came to Nandigrāma and installing the Lord’s sandals on the throne he began to administer the affairs of the state” (Vanaparva 277.39).

In the Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa it is stated that when Bharata reached Nandigrāma, he addressed the elders’ assembly as below—

“My eldest brother Śrī Rāma has made over this kingdom to me as His most valued trust and to look after its welfare I have with me His pair of gold-ornamented sandals.”

“These sandals of the noble Śrī Rāma are the representatives of His feet; I, therefore, ask you to accord them royal honour by placing them under the royal umbrella. These my Master’s sandals will undoubtedly establish righteousness in the kingdom” (Ayodhyākāṇḍa 115. 14,16).

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After that he duly consecrated the venerable sandals of Śrī Rāma and putting himself under their control he began to administer the kingdom. Whatever he received as a present and whatever business came up to him he always referred to the sandals before disposing of it in the right manner.

When Hanumān went to Nandigrāma he saw that—

“Bharata had grown much weak and dejected living in a shack. His matted hair had grown into a clotted mass and his body had become grimy; the anguish caused by his brother’s exile had gnawed through his whole frame and he subsisted on roots and fruits only. Controlling his senses he practised penance and was steadily devoted to the observance of Dharma. He carried a heavy burden of matted hair on his head and wore bark garments and deer-skin. His life was

strictly regulated and his mind had become immaculate. With a spiritual glow about him he looked like a Brahmarsi while ruling the world on behalf of Śrī Rāma's sandals" (Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa, Yuddhakāṇḍa 125. 30—32).

Similar expression about him is found in the Mahābhārata, which runs thus—

“On returning to Nandigrāma after His exile Śrī Rāma beheld Bharata facing the sandals, with his body growing grimy and wearing bark as his garments” (Vanaparva 291.62-63).

When Bharata saw Śrī Rāma returning home, he felt exceedingly happy as is clear from the following lines—

“Placing on his head Śrī Rāma's sandals and accompanied by the ministers the high-souled Bharata advanced to accord warm welcome to Him. For that purpose he also took with him a silvery white umbrella adorned with streaming white garlands all-around and a silver-white fan of chowri fitted with a gold handle worthy of a sovereign” (Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa, Yuddhakāṇḍa 127.17-18, 20).

We find a similar passage in the Adhyātma-Rāmāyaṇa—

“Bharata placed on his head Śrī Rāma's sandals, joined both of his palms and went on foot along with his younger brother Śatrughna, to bid Him welcome home” (Yuddhakāṇḍa. XIV. 75-76).

Such a spirit or example of adoring the sandals as equal to the Lord's feet we do not find anywhere before the birth of Bharata. We should, therefore, make Bharata our ideal and serve the Lord's lotus-feet, His sandals and the dust of His feet with equal reverence.

(5) Arcana-Bhakti

This consists in offering service and worship direct to the embodied Lord, or His image of metal, stone or clay or

even His picture or mental image with reverence and devotion through numerous material or conceptual means, and getting filled with rapture while musing again and again on His reality, mysteries and glory.

These aforesaid marks were abundantly present in Bharata. Apart from lovingly worshipping the Lord in person, he offered Him mental worship during His exile and mentally installed Him on the throne to render service to Him. This had become a habit with him. On his way to Citrakūṭa when Bharata visited the hermitage of the sage Bharadvāja the latter through his supernatural powers produced a royal palace equipped with a wonderful throne worthy of a sovereign to honour the former. But Bharata refused to occupy it; on the other hand, he treated it as a royal throne of Śrī Rāma Himself and accordingly he stood all attention like a vigilant minister throughout the night waving a fan of chowri.

The sage Vālmīki observes—

“Bharata beheld there a heavenly throne, a fan of chowri and a royal umbrella. He felt as if the Lord Himself was present there and thus reverently paced round them along with the ministers keeping the royal emblem to his right. Visualizing the Lord as seated on the throne he humbly bowed at His feet and worshipped the throne as well. He took a fan of chowri in his (right) hand and sat on a minister’s seat himself” (Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa, Ayodhyākāṇḍa 91.38-39).

Thus Bharata spent the whole night in serving and worshipping the Lord. How sublime is this service to and worship of the Lord !

At Nandigrāma Bharata installed a pair of Śrī Rāma’s sandals on the royal throne as His representative and himself

lived all through His exile as a priest worshipping them with green leaves, flowers and burning incense according to the injunction of the Śāstras.

So says the *Adhyātma-Rāmāyaṇa*—

“There on the throne Bharata, who was steadfast in his vow, placed the sandals and worshipped them each day with unwavering loyalty by offering all royal honours to them in the shape of flowers, unbroken rice-grains and burning incense. He then attended to the royal duties pertaining to the administration of the whole world by constantly referring them to the sandals.”

A similar passage occurs in the *Padmapurāṇa*—

“Bharata, the son of Kaikeyī, worshipped everyday the blessed sandals of Śrī Rāma, which he had placed on the throne, with perfume, flowers and unbroken rice-grains. Thus he, the jewel among the sovereigns, began to pass his days at Nandigrāma by putting himself under the rigour of a monastic vow.”

Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa also sings—

“Bharata daily worshipped the Lord’s sandals with a heart overflowing with affection, and constantly referred to them in the disposal of the many affairs of the state.”

Although the worship of an image of the Lord is found prescribed in all the Śāstras, it is Bharata who teaches us for the first time to worship the sandals of His feet with due reverence and love in its place. Glory, indeed, to his Arcana-Bhakti.

After the expiry of the term of his exile when Śrī Rāma flew back to Ayodhyā in the Puṣpakavimāna, Bharata came forward and offered Him direct worship through Arghya and Pādyā (offering water for washing His hands and feet) in the prescribed form while He was still seated in His aerial car.

It is depicted in the Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa that—

“Bharata came and stood smiling before Śrī Rāma with joined palms and eyes fixed on Him. He offered Śrī Rāma while He was still in the aerial plane Arghya, Pādya etc., with all due honours in the shape of prescribed worship.”

Likewise we find numerous references to the worship performed by Bharata in the stories of Śrī Rāma. Keeping Bharata, therefore, as an ideal before us we too should persevere in serving and worshipping the Lord.

(6) Vandana-Bhakti

This consists in reverently making obeisance through body or mind direct to the lotus-feet of the Lord, or His form as described in the Śāstras, His name or His image of metal, stone or clay or His picture and getting lost in a transport of joy while doing so. All these traits are found exemplified in Bharata. His Vandana-Bhakti is too well-known to require any clarification or elaboration; when Bharata proceeded to the forest to request Śrī Rāma to come back, he traversed the whole route from Ayodhyā to Citrakūṭa making repeated obeisances and on reaching there he fell prostrate at the Lord's feet and got stirred up with a sweeping emotion. Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa says—

“The moment Bharata heard the words of his friend (Guha) and saw the trees, tears rushed to his eyes. The two brothers (Bharata and Śatrughna) made obeisance as they proceeded; even Śāradā (the Goddess of speech) felt diffident in describing their love for Śrī Rāma.”

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“When the two brothers (Bharata and Śatrughna) fell prostrate at Śrī Rāma's feet, Lakṣmaṇa bowed his head to the ground and lovingly said—“Bharata is making obeisance to You, O Lord of Raghu.”

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“In a rapture of love Bharata and his younger brother placed on their head the dust of Sītā’s lotus-feet and made obeisance to Her again and again; while She lifted them each time and stroking their head with Her lotus-hand made them sit down.”

The *Adhyātma-Rāmāyaṇa* says—

“Bharata approached Śrī Rāma and pleaded with Him to forget the wrong done to Him by his mother (Kaikeyī) and protect them. He placed Śrī Rāma’s lotus-feet on his head with a heart full of devotion and then fell prone on the ground before Him” (*Ayodhyākāṇḍa* IX. 25-26).

Even when Bharata took leave of Śrī Rāma at Citrakūṭa for returning to Ayodhyā, he made obeisance to Him and departed with an afflicted heart.

Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa observes—

“So saying he was utterly overwhelmed with emotion; a thrill ran through his body and tears rushed to his eyes. In great distress he clasped the Lord’s lotus-feet; the excitement of the moment and the intensity of affection cannot be described in words.”

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The two brothers (Bharata and Satrughna) adored the lotus-feet of their lord and bowing to the orders of Śrī Rāma they set out on their journey.

The moment Śrī Rāma arrived back in Ayodhyā from His exile Bharata clasped His feet and would not leave them on any account. But the Lord forcibly lifted him up and hugged him close to His bosom. After a while when Bharata recovered himself he made obeisance to Sītā and begged of Her to forgive his offence.

The *Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa* says—

“Soon after Bharata beheld his brother, Śrī Rāma,

occupying the front seat in the aerial car and made humble obeisance to Him just as one would do on catching sight of the rising sun over Mount Meru. Śrī Rāma picked up Bharata of unfailing valour into the airship. On approaching the blessed Lord of Raghus, Bharata made obeisance to Him once more with a gladdened heart. Next he embraced his brother Lakṣmaṇa and after that the vanquisher of his enemies, Bharata, bowed his head at Sītā's feet announcing his name to her" (Yuddhakāṇḍa 127. 37,39,41).

A similar description we find in the *Adhyātma-Rāmāyaṇa* also—

“At that moment Śrī Rāma picked up Bharata along with his younger brother, Śatruघna, into the aerial car. On approaching Śrī Rāma Bharata felt overwhelmed with joy and fell prostrate at His feet again. Thus overwhelmed with love he clasped Lakṣmaṇa to his bosom, heralded his own name to Sītā and made obeisance to Her in reverence and devotion” (Yuddhakāṇḍa XIV. 83,85).

A glimpse of Bharata's condition at that moment we can have in the *Padmapurāṇa* too—

When Bharata saw Śrī Rāma with His chief allies land (at Ayodhyā) tears of joy gushed forth from his eyes and he dropped to the ground before Him like a log. The Lord again and again tried to lift him up but he did not rise: on the other hand he clasped with both his hands the lotus-feet of the Lord and wept copiously. After a while he turned and beheld the daughter of Janaka, a jewel among faithful and virtuous wives, and then reverently bowing at her feet he exclaimed, “O Mother, forgive any offence that has been done by this fool.”

Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa says—

“Bharata caught hold of the Lord's feet, at which bow

low even Brahmā, Śaṅkara, other gods and sages. He laid himself on the ground and did not rise even when lifted up; but the Lord, the ocean of mercy, in his affection forcibly drew him to His bosom. On the dark-hued body of Bharata, stood erect his hair, his lotus-like eyes streaming with tears."

What a sublime picture of love and humility we find here ! Bharata was the very embodiment of love and modesty. Bowing always at the feet of the Lord was an inborn habit with him. Whenever he met the Lord, he made obeisance to Him. His Vandana-Bhakti is worth coveting for all of us.

(7) Dāsyā-Bhakti

This finds expression in serving the Lord with reverence and devotion and submissively carrying out His behests, regarding Him one's sole Master and oneself His servant while keeping one's eye on His virtues, reality, mysteries and glory.

The whole record of Bharata's life is replete with this type of Devotion. This rather dominated his very being. When he returned to Ayodhyā from his maternal grandfather's home, he straight off told his mother, Kaikeyī that he would not rest content until he had brought back Śrī Rāma and placed himself under Him as a servant. Later on the preceptor, Vasiṣṭha, as well as the ministers tried their utmost to install him as a sovereign but he politely refused to submit to their importunities; for, as he said, he did not expect that his installation would do any good to him or to them. He believed that his good lay in the service of the Lord alone. All were enraptured to hear his reply; and it was with such feelings that Bharata left Ayodhyā for Citrakūṭa to bring back Śrī Rāma. On the way wherever he broke his journey

his behaviour and talk betrayed the same feeling. During his stay at Citrakūṭa every movement of his, revealed his spirit of service to the Lord; for he was a living example of this sentiment. He deemed it his paramount duty to obey and serve the Lord all his life and therein he saw his supreme good. In his eye there was no duty higher than the service of Śrī Rāma. He would fain carry out even the most difficult command of his Master, and he deemed it a sin to embarrass Him. He bore separation from the Lord for fourteen long years only to obey His orders; and while discharging his royal obligations he evidenced at every step his spirit of service to the Lord. Nay, he offered back His kingdom at His lotus-feet when He returned to Ayodhyā and himself spent his whole life in serving and obeying Him. Even when the Lord went out of the city on a pleasure trip, it was his main duty to do service to the Lord and request Him to impart teachings conducive to his welfare. Thus Bharata spent his whole life-time mainly as a servant of the Lord.

The Lord Himself was enamoured of Bharata for the rare sentiments of service, obedience and love he bore towards Him. And in this respect he stands so high that there is no phrase which can adequately praise him. Bharata, indeed, answers our highest conception of love and service with humility. Although his whole conduct in life represents the spirit of service yet there are certain instances which need particular mention and for that purpose we give below a brief review of his Dāsyā-Bhakti (Devotion through service) by quoting a few excerpts from the scriptures.

Bharata tells his mother Kaikeyī that—

“I will go and bring back Śrī Rāma, that self-effulgent glorious Mahāpuruṣa, and putting myself under Him as His

servant shall lead my life with composure and peace of mind" (Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa, Ayodhyākāṇḍa 73.27).

So tells the Adhyātma-Rāmāyaṇa—

“I have decided that I must leave that whole kingdom once for all and set out for the forest this very day to devote every moment of my life to the service of Śrī Rāma and Sītā whose lotus-faces are lit up with sweet smiles.”

Bharata addressed his preceptor, Vasiṣṭha, and the ministers thus—

“My good lies in the service of Śrī Rāma, the consort of Sītā, but I have been deprived of that privilege through my mother’s perversity” (Rāmacaritamānasa, Ayodhyākāṇḍa).

On the way to Citrakūṭa he said to Guha—

“If I ever become the servant of the servants of Śrī Rāma, I will no doubt realize the accomplishment of my life.”

What a sublime craving is this !

When Bharata arrived at Citrakūṭa and approached Śrī Rāma he pleaded with Him in the following words—

“(All right, if you have no intention to go back to Ayodhyā, be pleased to order that) I may also, like Lakṣmaṇa, accompany you to the forest and remain in your service, otherwise I will give up my life by fasting unto death.” This clearly shows his earnestness to serve the Lord.

But the moment he reflected on the nature of Śrī Bhagavān, he began to say—

“Now, O mine of compassion, take steps to see that you do not feel perturbed for the sake of your servant. A servant who seeks his own gain by placing his master in an embarrassing situation is a mean-minded fellow. A servant will gain only if he serves his master renouncing all his personal comforts and greed” (Rāmacaritamānasa, Ayodhyākāṇḍa).

After the coronation ceremony of the Lord whenever He went for outing to a beautiful garden or grove, Bharata always followed Him for doing service. Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa observes—

“On hearing the Lord’s words Bharata clasped His feet and said ‘Listen, my Lord, reliever of all the anxieties of the suppliant.

O ocean of compassion, I make bold to say that I am Your servant and You the benefactor of Your (faithful) people.”

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“The Lord, the remover of weariness, Himself felt weary and repaired to a cool mango grove, where Bharata spread his own scarf on the ground, and there the Lord took His seat with all His brothers in attendance” (Rāmacaritamānasa, Uttarākānda).

Thus Bharata remained steadfast in serving the Lord throughout his life. Glory all to his unwavering faith in the Dāsyā-Bhakti ! After a thorough study of Bharata’s life and keeping the spirit of his Dāsyā-Bhakti as our beacon we may follow in his footsteps.

(8) Sakhya-Bhakti

Moulding oneself according to the Lord’s liking and loving Him exclusively as a friend with supreme faith and while recognizing His power, truth, mysteries and glory, and remaining ever cheerful and enamoured of His virtues, beauty and exploits is called Sakhya-Bhakti.

We do not find any exclusive expression of this type of Devotion in the conduct or sentiments of Bharata; but we find this sentiment of friendship revealed in him conjointly with other sentiments of devotion to the Lord.

In the Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa Bharata says to his mother,

“Tell me at once the whereabouts of Śrī Rāma of guileless nature, who is my father, brother and friend all in one and whose avowed servant I am.”

At Citrakūṭa while approaching Śrī Rāma he said, “Along with these ministers I bow my head and submit that I am your brother (friend), pupil and servant; please therefore take compassion on me.”

In these above-quoted passages we find the words ‘Bandhu’ and ‘Bhrātā’ (friend and brother) used along with the words ‘father’, ‘servant’ and ‘pupil’, which indicate the sentiment of friendship. Moreover, the distinctive use of the word ‘Bandhu’ side by side with ‘brother’ unmistakably proves the existence of this sentiment. Therefore, we are led to believe that Bharata embodied in himself the spirit of a friend (comrade) too along with that of a brother, a servant and a pupil. The feeling of brotherhood naturally implies the sense of equality, which indicates the spirit of friendship. In support of this assertion we refer our readers to the Rāmacaritamānasa in which Bharata himself speaks out his mind as below—

“O Lord, You are my father, mother, friend, preceptor, master, the object of my adoration, my greatest benefactor and my inner controller.”

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“It is a great mistake to say too much to a friend (well-wisher), an intelligent and good master. Therefore, be pleased, my lord, to give Your command; for You have accomplished all my objects” (Ayodhyā-Kāṇḍa).

In the above-quoted passages the word ‘Suhṛd’ (friend) has been used along with other predicates such as, lord, father, mother, preceptor, master, object of adoration and well-wisher, etc., and bears a distinct sense. Hence the

word 'Suhṛd' unmistakably points to the sentiment of friendship. Undoubtedly Bharata, though dominated by a spirit of service, also embodied in himself the sentiment of friendship which naturally followed from the feeling of brotherly affection and love he bore towards the Lord.

Even Śrī Rāma's treatment towards His brothers betrays His attitude of friendship towards them. Before His retirement to the forest and while the preparations for His installation were going on, Śrī Rāma expressed the following sentiments, recognizing His brothers' equal right to the sovereignty of Ayodhyā—

"My brothers and myself were all born together and together have we dined, slept and played in our childhood; the ceremony of piercing our ear-lobes, our investiture with the sacred thread, wedding and all other ceremonies have been gone through together. The only unseemly practice in this spotless line is that the eldest should be installed on the throne to the exclusion of his younger brothers."

Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa says that this loving and graceful expression of regret on the part of the Lord may drive away all suspicion from the mind of His devotees.

This reveals Śrī Rāma's attitude of friendship towards His brothers. Nay, He particularly addressed Lakṣmaṇa as a friend at several places. When Lakṣmaṇa got ready to accompany Him to the forest, the Lord said to him—

"You are affectionate, pious, full of fortitude and ever devoted to the path of righteousness. Nay, you are dear to me as life, submissive and obedient to me and my friend as well."

Again, in the Pātālakhaṇḍa of the Padmapurāṇa, we find a passage in which Śrī Rāma in a state of ecstatic delight on seeing Bharata after His exile uses the word

'brother' with reference to him as many as six times. This implies Śrī Rāma's regard and love for Bharata as His equal and this betokens his attitude of friendship towards Him. In this way it furnishes a proof of His friendly regard towards Bharata. The passage runs as follows—

"When Śrī Rāma saw Bharata after long years of separation from him, His heart melted through excess of emotion and exclaiming again and again 'brother, O brother, my brother, dear brother, beloved brother' He got down immediately from His aerial car."

That Śrī Rāma treated Bharata on an equal footing with due regard will be clear from a reference to the Rāmacaritamānasa as well. Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa says—

"The ocean of kindness, Śrī Rāma, honoured Bharata in endearing terms and clasping his hand made him sit beside Him."

This again goes to establish the Lord's friendly spirit towards Bharata. At numerous places we find Śrī Rāma treating Bharata with love, respect and on a footing of equality. Whenever Bharata made obeisance to Him the Lord lifted him up and warmly, embraced him. This treatment of the Lord clearly evidences His sentiment of friendship towards His faithful devotee.

(9) Ātmanivedana-Bhakti

This comprises unconditional surrender to the Lord through supreme faith and reverence, of one's whole being with all one's possessions including one's body, mind, wealth, family, servants as well as one's actions, renouncing once for all one's ego-sense and attachment after duly comprehending the Lord's truth, mysteries, might and glory.

Bharata did not lag behind so far as this last type of Bhakti is concerned, because he regarded himself as

completely dedicated to Śrī Rāma. In the Rāmacaritamānasa we find him wailing and saying to his mother, Kaikeyī, with reference to his father's demise—

“I could not see you before you left (your mortal coil), nor did you, my dear father, entrust me to the care of Śrī Rāma.”

A similar passage occurs in the Adhyātma-Rāmāyaṇa—

“Ah ! father, where have you gone away leaving me in an ocean of grief? Alas ! without placing me under the protection of Śrī Rāma whither have you departed?”

These outbursts of grief on Bharata's part make it abundantly clear how intensely he felt himself as dedicated to Śrī Rāma. Besides this, he left for Citrakūṭa with the feeling that he as well as the kingdom with all its treasury only belonged to the Lord of Raghus, so that he would make over everything to Him and then devote himself to the service. On reaching there he tried his utmost to beseech and implore the Lord to return to Ayodhyā; but on no account would the Lord return to Ayodhyā. On the other hand, He constrained Bharata to rule the kingdom in His absence. Since, in the opinion of his preceptor, Vasiṣṭha, Bharata's supreme duty lay in carrying out Śrī Rāma's orders he bowed to it and made Śrī Rāma's sandals as the very prop of his life in His place and accordingly submitted himself and the whole empire to their care. Bharata not only offered the kingdom of Ayodhyā which he had held as a sacred trust but his whole being at His feet when Śrī Rāma returned to Ayodhyā after His exile of fourteen years. He believed that his supreme good was rooted in self-surrender to the Lord and accordingly he spent all his life in carrying out the Lord's behests. Leaving alone the kingdom or anything comprised therein, he did not claim even his body

as his own. The Lord was everything to him and he entirely depended on Him. The Rāmāyaṇa and the other scriptures bear testimony to Bharata's Ātmanivedana-Bhakti (complete submission to Śrī Rāma). In this behalf we quote below a few passages from these scriptures as an evidence:

Bharata told the sage Bharadvāja—

“Your Holiness, when Śrī Rāma is there, what have I to do with this sovereignty? I am, noble sir, His bond slave forever. Therefore I go to Him and falling at His lotus-feet I shall surrender all these emblems of sovereignty to Him, who is the Lord of Laksmī. And then I will take Him back to Ayodhyā and serve Him as His most abject servant” (Adhyātma-Rāmāyaṇa, Ayodhyākāṇḍa VIII. 49—51).

Bharata addressed Śrī Rāma in the following words surcharged with the sentiments of complete submission—

“With his lotus palms joined together he made loving obeisance and spoke, 'My Lord, I have derived the joy of having accompanied You and have also obtained the reward of being born into this world. Now, my gracious Lord, whatever be Your command, I will bow to it and carry it out with reverence. Pray vouchsafe to me, good sir, some tangible support by serving which I may be able to reach the end of Your exile.' ”

During his stay at Nandigrāma he said to the ministers—

“When I meet Śrī Rāma again I will entrust this kingdom to Him and shall thus be relieved of a great burden. Then I will put myself under Him and devote myself exclusively to His service. After returning to Him His blessed sandals, as well as the whole kingdom including Ayodhyā, which I hold as a sacred trust, I will be absolved of all sins and become pure.”

And what Bharata did when the Lord arrived back in Ayodhyā is recorded in the following lines—

“Then the pious Bharata took Śrī Rāma’s sandals in his own hands and placed them direct under His feet. And with his joined palms he submitted that his object had been accomplished and he had achieved the end of his existence by restoring to Him His whole kingdom which had been kept with him as a trust by the Lord Himself” (Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa, Yuddhakāṇḍa 127. 53—55)

A similar passage in this connection is found in the *Adhyātma-Rāmāyaṇa*—

“Soon after Bharata placed those duly worshipped sandals under Śrī Rāma’s feet with devotion and said, ‘My Lord, I deliver back to You Your trust in the form of this kingdom; I have accomplished the object of my life today and all my desires and aspirations stand fulfilled.’” (Yuddhakāṇḍa XIV. 93-94)

Similarly, *Mahābhārata* says—

“Bharata offered back to Śrī Rāma, after His return from the forest, the whole kingdom, kept with him as a sacred trust, with exceeding joy and supreme honour.” (Vanaparva 291.65)

In reality Bharata’s whole life was a living monument of absolute surrender to Śrī Rāma. Whatever he did, he did for Śrī Rāma. The main object of his life had always been his love for Śrī Rāma and His happiness. The sage Bharadvāja observed with regard to it—

“As for yourself, Bharata, my opinion is that you are the very incarnation of love for Rāma.”

Despite all these excellences Bharata saw no virtue in him; on the other hand, he looked upon himself as sense-bound, wicked and perverse. In fact true dedication is that

which is divorced from all sense of it—wherein everything stands automatically dedicated yet it is felt that nothing has been surrendered. Bharata's surrender is of this type. Those who follow in the footsteps of Bharata making his Ātmanivedana-Bhakti as their ideal can achieve the fruit of their life.

Epilogue

The nine types of Devotion have been discussed above; these should be classified under three heads. The first three, viz., Śravaṇa, Kīrtana and Smarana-Bhakti are practised in the absence of one's Deity. The second triplet namely Pādasevana, Arcana and Vandana-Bhakti is practised mainly in the presence of Śrī Bhagavān; failing that it can also be practised mentally visualizing the presence of the Lord.

These two sets of Devotion involve activity; the remaining three, viz., Dāsyā, Sakhyā and Ātmanivedana-Bhakti, represent mental attitudes. For, even though these mental attitudes are followed by action as well, it is the sentiment that predominates. In general the sentiment of love runs through Devotion in all its forms; every type of it bears a direct relation to this sentiment. Therefore, a devotion involving activity becomes a sentiment when it is associated with a mental attitude.

Many devotees take Śravaṇa-Bhakti in the sense of communing with pious souls, Kīrtana-Bhakti as another name for Bhajana or muttering of the Divine Name and Smarana-Bhakti as meditation; for all these three forms of Devotion are intimately connected with their counterparts as mentioned above. Hence these three types of Devotion have been classified under one head. Of these three, again, communion with pious souls, promotes both Bhajana and Dhyāna (the muttering of Divine Name and Meditation) like watering a tree at the roots. By practising even one of

these three a man can realize God as is evidenced in the case of Parīksit, Nārada, Dhruva, who severally realized Śrī Bhagavān through Śravaṇa, Kīrtana and Smaraṇa-Bhakti. Much less can there be any doubt about our realizing God in case we practise all the three together.

Similarly Pādasevana, Arcana and Vandana (adoring the Lord's feet, offering worship to Him and making obeisance to Him) have been bracketed together under another head. For service, worship and obeisance, all these three have particular reference to the feet. Even by practising anyone of these one can surely realize God just as did the boatman, king Pṛthu and Akrūra severally, by serving, worshipping and reverencing Lord's feet.

In the same way Dāsy, Sakhya and Ātmanivedana form one group inasmuch as their practice is based upon one's mental attitude. These sentiments can abide in a devotee all together or even separately. The practice of even one of these can lead to God-realization as was the case with Hanumān, Arjuna and Bali, who severally realized God through the sentiment of service, friendship and self-surrender. Much less can there be any doubt about one's realizing God by worshipping Him through all these sentiments together.

Hence we should practise disinterested Devotion to God with reverence and love, with fresh ardour and perseverance.



An Easy Road to Devotion

योगिनामपि सर्वेषां मद्गतेनान्तरात्मना ।
श्रद्धावान्भजते यो मां स मे युक्ततमो मतः ॥

(Gītā VI. 47)

“Of all Yogīs, again, he who devoutly worships Me with his mind focussed on Me is considered by Me to be the best Yogī.”

In the scriptures we find several means of God-realization like Bhaktiyoga, Jñānayoga, Karmayoga and Aṣṭāṅgayoga etc., but Bhaktiyoga being the easiest of all the Yogas is considered to be the best. Everybody, to whatever sex, age, social grade or stage of life one belongs, is qualified to tread the path of Devotion, because its portals are easily accessible to all. Howsoever confirmed a sinner may be, he is retrieved immediately if he takes to worshipping the Lord with devotion. The Lord says—

“Even if the vilest sinner worships Me with exclusive devotion, he should be accounted a saint, for he has rightly resolved. (He is positive in his belief that there is nothing like devoted worship of God.) Speedily he becomes virtuous and secures lasting peace. Know it for certain, Arjuna, that My devotee never falls” (Gītā IX. 30-31).

Similarly, a man of the lowest caste can be redeemed by following the path of Devotion. The Lord says—

“Arjuna! Women, Vaiśyas (members of the trading and agriculturist classes), Śūdras (those belonging to the labouring and artisan classes), as well as those of vile birth (such as the pariah), whoever they may be, taking refuge in Me they too attain the supreme good” (Gītā IX. 32).

Even a man who is at death's door can realize God in no time through the force of Devotion. The *Gītā* affirms it—

“He who departs from the body, thinking of Me alone even at the time of death, attains My state; there is no doubt about it” (VIII.5).

If it is asserted that without Knowledge (Jñāna) none can attain blessedness, we submit that a person who is blessed with devotion to God is automatically endowed with Jñāna by God's grace. The Lord Himself avers it in the *Gītā*—

“On those ever united through meditation with Me and worshipping Me with love, I confer that yoga of wisdom through which they come to Me. In order to shower My grace on them I, dwelling in their heart, dispel the darkness born of ignorance by the shining light of wisdom” (X. 10-11).

All these foregoing passages lead us to conclude that the attainment of God is very easy for a man, howsoever low and vile he may be in the social scale or in the matter of personal conduct in addition to his being dull-witted. Love for and faith in God are the two things that are primarily needed in a man; if he possesses these two qualifications he can be easily and quickly redeemed by virtue of his Devotion.

We do not find any other means of God-realization glorified so much as Bhakti (Devotion) in scriptures like the *Gītā*, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Bhāgavata* etc. Hence realizing Devotion as useful for all one should practise it with unmitigated diligence. Although Bhakti is easy to cultivate in every clime and age, yet its importance cannot be over-estimated in this age of Kali; and hence we find its praises in abundance. Śrī Vedavyāsa observes—

“Chanting the Divine Name in the Kali age secures all

one's secular as well as spiritual ends; that is why the noble men of flair knowing the worth of everything hold the Kali age in high esteem."

This gives an assurance that God can be attained in this Kali age in a comparatively short time. And it is God's grace that we have been endowed with the best of life and are born in this holy land of Bhārata and a glorious religion, and particularly in such propitious times, the age of Kali. That we get from time to time in this iron age opportunities to listen to religious and spiritual discourses and to study the sacred books is a special feature of His grace on us. Of the three worlds (heaven, earth and the nether world) the earth is the best, and on this globe our Bhārata is recognized as the most favoured land. This land of ours was known for her deep learning in ancient days and people from other countries used to call here in search of knowledge. Referring to this Lord Manu says—

एतदेशप्रसूतस्य सकाशादग्रजन्मनः ।
स्वं स्वं चरित्रं शिक्षेन् पृथिव्यां सर्वमानवाः ॥

(Manusmṛti II, 20)

"To the Brāhmaṇas (spiritual teachers) born in this land (Bhārata) should resort all the people of this entire globe for receiving instruction in their respective code of conduct."

That Bhārata is our motherland in whose lap we are born and have our being; and the present times, too, hold our good prospects for us. The Kali age, which is a storehouse of all the vices, has one prominent redeeming feature, viz., that one can without any exertion realize the object of one's existence through the practice of Devotion alone. We find in the Skandapurāna—

"The age of Kali is replete with vices but it has one great virtue, viz., that a man can realize God in a very short

time through spiritual endeavour" (Māheśwarakhaṇḍa, Kumārikākhaṇḍa xxxv. 115).

Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa extols this age in the following words—

"No other age can compare with the Kali age provided a man has faith (in its virtue); for in this age one can easily cross the ocean of transmigration by singing Śrī Rāma's holy praises."

Moreover, in human birth alone one becomes qualified to attain God. That is why the scriptures eloquently praise the worth of a human body. The Rāmacaritamānasa says—

"It is by great good fortune that one is able to secure a human body, which—as declared by all the scriptures—is difficult even for the gods to attain."

The eternal Vedic religion is dateless and best of all religions. At present, no doubt, there have come into being numerous faiths and cults that go under the name of religion, but there are only four principal religions, viz., Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity, each of which commands hundreds of millions of followers. A critical study of all these religions compels us to believe that it is the Hindu Vedic Dharma which is the oldest of all religions. Buddhism of Gautama Buddha came into light about two thousand and five hundred years ago, because the date of Buddha's birth itself is traced back not earlier to that period. Christianity grew within the last two thousand years, because its founder himself was born in the year 4 B.C. The Kurāna is the only sacred book of the Muslims on which Islam is based. Its revealer was the prophet Mohammed, who was born in the year 570 A.D., about five hundred and forty-one years after Christ's crucifixion. Hence these two religions are not very old. On the other hand, the eternal Vedic Dharma is not attributable to any

human being because it is dateless; nobody, therefore, dare fathom its age. All other faiths and cults worth the name that are seen in the world today have drawn their inspiration from the Vedic religion. Innumerable sects have sprung up because of the diverse notions of their leaders. We shall not, therefore, be guilty of exaggeration if we submit that the religion based on the authority of the Śrutis and Smṛtis is eternal and therefore best of all religions. The cornerstone of our religion is the Vedas, which consist of the Mantra section and the Brāhmaṇas. The Vedas were divided into numerous branches, many of which were destroyed by heretics. Yet, the stem in the form of the Mantra section and the Brāhmaṇas is available. The Rk, the Yajus, the Sāma and the Atharva—all these four Vedas come under the Mantra section; while the Brāhmaṇas such as the Aitareya, the Taittirīya and Śatapatha etc., as well as most of the Upaniṣads fall under the category of the Brāhmaṇas. And this Vedic Dharma has been in existence from time immemorial; that is why it is recognized as eternal. We are fortunate enough to have been born among the followers of such an eternal religion.

Besides, it is God's special favour that we enjoy the fellowship of holy persons from time to time. We find in the Skandapurāṇa—

तदैव	जीवस्य	भवेत्कृपा	विभो
	दुरन्तशक्तेस्तव		विश्वमूर्ते ।
समागमः	स्यान्महतां	हि	पुंसां
	भवान्म्बुधिर्येन	हि	गोष्यदायते ॥
सत्सङ्गमो	देव	यदैव	भूयात्
	तर्हीश	देवे	त्वयि जायते मतिः ।

(Vaiṣṇavakhaṇḍa, Vaiśākhamāsa-Māhātmya XVI. 18-19)

“O Lord, manifested in the form of the universe and

possessed of infinite strength, when you show your grace to the individual soul, it is only then that it gets an opportunity to enjoy communion with high-souled ones by virtue of which the ocean of mundane existence shrinks to the size of a cow's footprint for it. And, Lord, it is only when one is blessed with such fellowship with pious souls that one comes to develop unwavering and implicit faith in You."

Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa says—

"The fellowship of genuine saints is only attained by those whom Śrī Rāma regards with favour" (Rāmacaritamānasa).

In the same book we find the devotee Vibhīṣaṇa addressing Hanumān as under—

"I am now confident, Hanumān (that Śrī Rāma will shower His grace on me); for one can never meet a saint without Śrī Hari's grace."

Thus having got all such resources, if we fail to realize God even now it would be a matter of great shame and sorrow for us. Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa says—

"The man who, though equipped with all these resources, fails to cross the ocean of metempsychosis, is ungrateful and dull-witted and meets the fate of a self-murderer."

Therefore, having obtained the invaluable human birth we should shake off our attachment to the body as well as to the worldly enjoyments and diligently strive with all our resources for God-realization till the last breath, otherwise we shall have to suffer interminable repentance in the end. Says Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa—

"Such a man reaps a harvest of sorrow in the other world, beats his head in remorse and levels a false accusation against Time, Fate and God" (Rāmacaritamānasa).

Considering all this one should take to spiritual practices

for God-realization at the earliest moment. Death is always uncertain; nobody knows when it would pounce upon us.

We should look upon God as the only prop of our existence; barring Him there is no other means of securing our redemption. In fact, life becomes impossible without Him. If we but realize the imperative and immediate need of God we can attain Him very soon. A man for whom God becomes indispensable can never forget Him even when threatened with the worst calamity. In this connection let us take the example of the great devotee, Dhruva, the son of king Uttānapāda. When he was doing penance and was absorbed in meditation, the demons placed numerous obstacles in his way; but he remained unshaken in his resolve and undisturbed in his meditation. Dhruva attained the Lord in the course of five months and a half through the intense practice of Japa (chanting the Divine Name), penance and meditation in the Satyayuga (the golden age). In this age of Kali, however, if one takes to the unremitting practice of Japa, austere penance and meditation like Dhruva, one can realize God even earlier. The Skandapurāṇa authoritatively says—

“The merit which was earned in the Satyayuga by prosecuting Sādhanā (spiritual practices for God-realization) for ten years could be earned in the course of a year in Tretā and even in a month in Dvāpara. The same can be acquired in a single day in the Kali age (if one strives for God-realization) with the same zeal.”* (Brāhmakhaṇḍa, Setu-Māhātmya XLIII. 3-4).

Elsewhere in the same Purāṇa we read as follows—

“The fruit that a wise man could get after stoically observing

* दशवर्षस्तु यत्पुण्यं क्रियते तु कृतेयुगे । त्रेतायामेकवर्षेण तत्पुण्यं साध्यते नृभिः ॥
द्वापरे तच्च मासेन तद्विनेन कलौ युगे ।

a vow of piety for a full year in the Tretā and for a month in the Dvāpara age can be obtained in a single day in Kali”* (Māheśvarakhaṇḍa, Kumārikākhaṇḍa, XXXV. 117).

Thus after calculating we may say that one can attain God in about an hour if only one strives for His attainment with the earnestness of Dhruva. It may be urged here that one is unable to control one’s breath like Dhruva in this age. To this we submit that if you pursue a course of Sādhanā without holding your breath, you can realize God at least in three days if not in an hour. Again, it may be argued that like Dhruva it is not possible to stand on one leg for three days successively. To this our reply is that if you prosecute your Sādhanā in a sitting posture even then you must attain God within six days if not in three days. Further, if you cannot resist the calls of nature and cannot conquer hunger, thirst and sleep, you may take some milk and fruits once in twenty-four hours and practise Japa of the Divine Name and contemplation on the Lord without interruption like Dhruva. By continuing such unremitting practice (Sādhanā) you can certainly realize God at least in the same period as Dhruva; otherwise what special significance would you attach to the Kali age? Such a concession must be allowed to us in the Kali age.

Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa too proclaims—

“Practise Japa of the Divine Name for a period of six months, living upon milk or fruits only and you shall have all sorts of blessings and supernatural powers in the palm of your hands”† (Dohāvalī).

The main idea implied in this quotation is that a man should at least devote himself to the practice of adoration

* त्रेतायां वार्षिको धर्मो द्वापरे मासिकः स्मृतः । यथा क्लेशं चरन् प्राज्ञस्तदह्ना प्राप्यते कलौ ॥

† पय अहार फल खाइ जपु राम नाम षट मास ।

सकल सुमंगल सिद्धि सब करतल तुलसीदास ॥

and meditation for six months without break and that it should be undertaken purely out of disinterested love with a view to God-realization alone; no desire for worldly objects should intervene during the period of Sādhanā. The time-limit has been extended to six months only because we lack in faith and devotion; otherwise, if one possesses unalloyed and exclusive Love for the Lord, hunger, thirst and sleep would count little in his eyes. Then he would lose consciousness of his own body, to say nothing of any other object than God. When one attains such a state, the Lord loses no time to meet His devotee and bless him with His sight. For, when the Lord likes to meet His devotee time is no consideration with Him; all that is required is an irresistible urge and intense longing to meet Him.

Nārāyaṇasvāmī observes in the following strain—

“Everybody talks glibly of love; but the only love worth the name is that in which one loses consciousness of one’s body and self.”*

In the Bhāgavata we find a reference to king Khatvāṅga, son of king Viśvasaha, who was born in the line of Sagara. When he asked the gods as to how long he would live on earth, the gods told him that he would die within an hour. Hearing this the king composed his mind and, renouncing all other thought, was wholly immersed in the thought of the Lord. Lo ! as a result of this intense longing he realized Lord Śrī Hari within that hour!

God-realization does not depend upon the length of one’s Sādhanā; it responds only to the intense longing of one’s heart for it. The Lord immediately meets him whose heart can brook no more delay in seeing Him. By way of illustration, suppose a man all of a sudden slips down into a river and

* लगन लगन सब कोइ कहै लगन कहावै सोइ ।
नारायन जिस लगनमें तन मन दीजै खोइ ॥

begins to drown in it; and the tragedy is that he does not know swimming. In that case the feverish urge that he feels to get out of the water—the thought which is uppermost in his mind at that time is how to reach the bank—this is what is known as 'intense longing'. Likewise, he who focusses his attention on the Lord as the goal of his life and ardently seeks to come out of the ocean of worldly existence is immediately rescued from the vortex of metempsychosis by the Lord Himself. In the *Gītā* He says—

“These, Arjuna, I speedily deliver from the ocean of birth and death, their mind being fixed on Me” (XII.7).

The intense longing or ardent desire referred to in the above paragraph follows only from pure and exclusive love for the Lord. And when the aspirant develops such undivided and unalloyed love for the Lord, the latter at once manifests Himself before him. The characteristic mark of exclusive love is that it cannot bear separation from its object. The blessed one in whose heart wells up this love feels restless like Bharata on account of his separation from the Lord, so much so that he finds himself on the verge of death. Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa describes the mental anguish of Bharata in the following eloquent words—

“While Bharata’s mind was thus sinking in the ocean of separation from Śrī Rāma, the son of the wind-god, disguised as a Brāhmaṇa, came to his rescue like a bark.”

Can the Lord afford to withhold His sight any longer from a person who grows restless like Bharata in His absence? Certainly not. We should, therefore, feel most uneasy without the Lord, even as a fish feels without water. It may be argued here that a fish may wriggle itself to death and yet it may not get water. In reply to this we submit that it is just possible because water is insentient, but the Lord is not. He is all-consciousness and extremely compassionate;

how, then, can He fail to bless His devotee pining in love for Him? Moreover, His plighted word is there: "Howsoever men seek Me, even so do I approach them" (Gītā IV. 11).

The Lord can be easily attained if we keep our mind ever fixed on Him, just as the Cakora bird rivets its intent gaze on the full moon in the sky and refuses to withdraw it so long as the moon does not set. The Lord says—

"Arjuna, whosoever always and constantly thinks of Me with undivided mind, to that Yogi, ever absorbed in Me, I am easily attainable" * (Gītā VIII.14).

It may be pointed out here that the Cakora bird clearly sees the moon before it, hence it is easy for it to get enamoured of her. While appreciating the logic of this argument, we submit at the same time that the Lord, being omnipresent, becomes manifest only through our exclusive faith and devotion. And if we lack these two virtues the Lord is far removed from us though He may be present by our side all the while. When Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa graced the earth with His presence, people like Duryodhana who had no faith in or devotion towards Him did not realize that the most high was moving among them and for this reason He was inaccessible to them, even though present there and within their easy reach. But contrary to it, we find in the case of Dhruva that though the Lord was not present before him in a bodily form and thus remote from him, Dhruva made Him manifest by dint of his supreme faith and exclusive devotion. Therefore, just as Dhruva put implicit faith in the words of Devarṣi Nārada and accordingly concentrated his mind on the Lord, we should likewise fix our mind on Him, with unflinching faith and devotion according to the words of the Gītā, the Rāmāyaṇa and

* अनन्यवेता: सततं यो मां स्मरति नित्यशः ।
तस्याहं सुलभः पार्थ नित्ययुक्तस्य योगिनः ॥

Bhāgavata as well as of holy men. Whatever may happen we should carry on our Sādhanā undaunted like the little bird Cātaka that suffers untold hardships but does not abandon its love for the cloud-burst that the star Svātī (Arcturus) brings down for it. Although every cloud that hangs low in the sky does not quench its thirst, it pours out its endearing notes 'Pew, Pew' (meaning 'O beloved') at the sight of each and every cloud; and lo ! its unflinching faith at last brings down its beloved cloud from among them. Similarly, at the sight of Cātaka-like devotees of the Lord we should cherish the desire and hope to meet the Lord. The Cātaka's love for the cloud is proverbial; hailstones come down upon it and ruthlessly smash its wings; but it does not flicker in its resolve to love its beloved cloud, and in return it looks to the cloud for a drop of water with unabated hope. In the same way we too should never lose sight of God and should be ever hopeful to attain the Lord even amidst the greatest of calamities. It is a principle with the Cātaka that it will catch a drop from the cloud-burst alone and never looks to any other source of water even though it may die of thirst. Following in its footsteps we too should never crave for worldly enjoyments but for God alone, the nectar-drop for our Cātaka-like heart. It is possible that a Cātaka may not get the desired drop from the cloud-burst even though it needs it most and has a burning desire for it: for it is the Cātaka that cries for water and not water for the Cātaka. Unlike this the Lord never fails to meet His devotee who feels an irresistible urge to have His sight. For the Lord grows as impatient to meet His devotee as the devotee grows impatient for Him. The Lord Himself vouches for it when he says—

"Howsoever men seek Me, even so do I approach them." (Gītā IV. 11)

Again, the Lord says—

“I am equally present in all beings; there is none hateful or dear to Me. They, however, who devoutly worship Me abide in Me, and I too stand revealed in them” (Gītā XI. 29).

The enlightened devotee that worships the Lord with disinterested devotion loves Him most dearly, nay, he himself becomes extremely dear to Him. This the Lord proclaims in the Gītā while referring to the four types of devotees (the seeker after worldly possessions, the afflicted, the seeker for knowledge and the Jñānī possessed of Divine love)—

“Of these the best is the man of wisdom, ever established in identity with Me and possessed of exclusive devotion. For I am extremely dear to the wise man (who knows Me in reality), and he is extremely dear to Me.”

Hence, what is needed is that we should always and constantly carry on our practice of meditation with love and reverence in order to attain exclusive and unalloyed love for the Lord.

Just as ether is present in the air, fire, water and earth, even so God pervades all, and everything is comprised in a fragment of His Being. We should, therefore, constantly visualize God as present in everything as above. The Gītā says—

“He who sees Me (the Universal Self) present in all beings and all beings existing in Me, never loses sight of Me, and I never lose sight of him” (VI. 30).

We should uninterruptedly follow the above practice as told by the Lord Himself with unabated zeal and fervour. Or let us be ever transported with joy by looking upon every object as an image of the Lord and every activity as His play; for everything that exists in this world is a manifestation of the Lord. In the Upaniṣads we read how in

the beginning there was God alone, who thought, "Let Me multiply Myself"—सोऽकामयत । बहु स्यां प्रजायेयेति (Taittirīya. II. VI. 1). He then multiplied Himself. In the Dvāpara age when Brahmā stole away the cowherd boys as well as the calves and hid them in a cave, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself appeared in the form of cowherd boys and calves and began to enact their roles. The Bhāgavata says—

यावद् वत्सपवत्सकाल्पकतपुर्यावित्कराङ्ग्यादिकं
 यावद् यष्टिविषाणवेणुदलशिग् यावद्विभूषाम्बरम् ।
 यावच्छीलगुणाभिधाकृतिवयो यावद् विहारादिकं
 सर्वं विष्णुमयं गिरोऽङ्गवदजः सर्वस्वरूपो बभौ ॥

(X.xiii.19)

"The Lord, who is the Cosmic Soul, assumed as many forms as there were calves and cowherd boys that had been stolen away, bearing complete resemblance to them in their appearance and size, in every limb, viz., hands and feet, and in their gait, disposition, traits, manners, names and ages. He even appeared in the form of their sticks, horns, flutes, leaves, slings, clothes and ornaments. The truth of the Vedic dictum that the whole universe is Viṣṇu Himself manifested itself in this ocular demonstration."

In the same way we should experience ecstatic delight every moment in visualizing every object as God Himself and every activity as divine play. The above practice is excellent and very easy too for devotees.

Just as the world appears all green to a man who has put on a pair of green spectacles, even so the whole universe appears as a manifestation of Śrī Hari to a man whose heart is imbued with the presence of Śrī Hari. This process is even more radical than that of putting green glasses on one's eyes; for even though multicoloured, the world appears green only on account of the green glasses that one puts on.

Really speaking, however, this world is a manifestation of Śrī Hari; it is through ignorance that we fail to comprehend this truth. That is the reason why Śrī Hari appears to us in the form of this world. As a matter of fact, however, God alone was and is everything.

The Gītā too extols the vision of God in everything. The Lord says—

बहूनां जन्मनामन्ते ज्ञानवान्मां प्रपद्यते ।
वासुदेवः सर्वमिति स महात्मा सुदुर्लभः ॥

(VII.19)

“In the very last of all births the enlightened soul worships Me, realizing that all this is God. Such a great soul is very rare.”

The above practice is superb indeed. Hence we should visualize God in everything; through this practice too we can speedily realize God. There is an anecdote in the Chāndogyopaniṣad. Maharṣi Uddālaka asks his son, Śvetaketu, whether he has mastered that science by knowing which everything becomes known. To this the latter replied that even his preceptor did not know that science for had he known it, he would have surely confided the same to him. Hence he requested his father to impart that knowledge to him. Thereupon Maharṣi Uddālaka said that by knowing the substance of gold one comes to know all gold ornaments; that all gold ornaments of diverse names and forms, of diverse shapes and designs, are nothing but gold. Even so, to him who has realized the truth of God, everything appears as God. Again, just as a man who has come to know the truth of water sees water and water alone in a cloud, vapour, fog, rain-drop and snow, even so he who has realized the truth of God begins to see God in the whole universe. The dualist and the monist both have unequivocally admitted this truth. The only difference is

that while the monist believes that everything including himself is Brahma, the dualist maintains that all that exists is Brahma and he His servant. According to the mental equipment of the striver both these disciplines are highly commendable. In the *Rāmacaritamānasa* we find Śrī Rāma discoursing to Hanumān from the view-point of the Bhakti as follows—

समदरसी मोहि कह सब कोऊ । सेवक प्रिय अनन्यगति सोऊ ॥
 सो अनन्य जाकें असि मति न टरइ हनुमंत ।
 मैं सेवक सचराचर रूप स्वामि भगवंत ॥

“Everyone says that I look upon all with the same eye; but a devotee is particularly dear to Me because he too depends on none but Me. And he alone, Hanumān, is exclusively devoted to Me, who is steadfast in his conviction that he is the servant and that the Lord manifested in the form of the whole animate and inanimate creation is his Master.”

Being straight and easy to follow, this path of Devotion is the best for the generality of men. Everyone can become qualified to tread this path howsoever low-born and dull-witted he may be, provided he has love for the Lord. It is love alone that the Lord values. Śabari, the famous Bhīla woman, was almost unlettered and belonged to the lowest grade of society. When Śrī Rāma called on her in her own cottage, she spoke to the Lord as follows—

“How can I extol You, lowest in descent and the dullest of wit as I am? A woman is the lowest of those who rank as the lowest of the low. Of women, too, I am the most dull-headed, O destroyer of sins.”

To this Śrī Rāma graciously replied—

“Listen, O good lady, to My words: I recognize no other kinship except that of devotion.”

The Lord saw her loving devotion; and that is why He

went to her cottage and relished the jujubes so lovingly offered by her. Blessed is this motiveless compassion of the all-merciful Lord.

Those who lack in faith, love and reverence can neither practise real adoration nor can they speedily realize God. Therefore, realizing the virtues and kind disposition of the Lord and fully sanguine to meet Him we should ever be on the tiptoe to have His sight. We should have unwavering faith that God exists that He has granted and does grant His vision to His devotees and shall undoubtedly bless us with His sight. He will take no notice of our faults. His heart is extremely guileless, tender and brimful with love and compassion. That all-witnessing and omnipotent God is always present everywhere: He manifests Himself before His devotee as soon as the latter develops reverence and Love for Him.

In the Rāmacaritamānasa Lord Śiva says—

“For aught I know Śrī Hari is present everywhere alike and is revealed only by love.”

With such a firm conviction one should look forward like Śabari to meeting the Lord every moment. Through such expectancy one can hope to meet the Lord in a comparatively short time. If on the other hand, there is some doubt lurking in our mind as to whether the Lord exists or not, whether anyone has ever realized Him in the past, and whether He is open to perception now or not, then God-realization becomes difficult for us. For, far from realizing God, the ignorant man who lacks faith and is possessed by doubt is lost to this world as well as the next.

The Lord says in the Gītā—

अज्ञश्चाश्रद्धानश्च संशयात्मा विनश्यति ।
नायं लोकोऽस्ति न परो न सुखं संशयात्मनः ॥

(IV. 40)

“He who lacks discrimination, is devoid of faith, and is at the same time possessed by doubt is lost to the spiritual path. For the doubting soul there is neither this world nor the world beyond, nor even happiness.”

For the man who is doubtful about God-realization can neither entertain any hope nor strive for the same. How, then, can he expect to fix his mind on God? Therefore, howsoever degraded, sinful, ignorant or dull-witted we may be, we should endeavour to attain the Lord with unflinching faith and reverence. The Lord is extremely compassionate, He never takes into account our faults and frailties. Bharata says in the *Rāmacaritamānasa*—

जन अवगुन प्रभु मान न काऊ।
 दीनबंधु अति मृदुल सुभाऊ॥
 मोरे जियँ भरोस दृढ़ सोई।
 मिलिहहिं राम सगुन सुभ होई॥

“The Lord never takes into account the faults of His devotees, being a friend of the humble and most tender-hearted. I have a firm conviction in my heart that Śrī Rāma will surely meet me; for the omens are propitious.”

Counting on the vow of the Lord on this testimony we should feel confident that the Lord would, despite ourselves, accept us as His own and bless us with His sight one day.

There was a Brāhmaṇa devotee, Padmanābha by name; armed with the above belief he ever said to himself: “The Lord will surely meet me. And even as He comes before me I will roll at His lotus-feet and drench them with my tears of love. The Lord will then lift and clasp me to His bosom; thus plunging me in an ocean of ecstatic delight when the Lord urges me to ask Him a boon, I shall only submit that I have no desire except that of serving Him and of keeping my gaze ever fixed on His countenance.”

Padmanābha would repeat these words to himself and get drowned in ecstatic delight. His whole frame was thrilled with joy and tears rolled down his cheeks. This exalted state of his feeling continued for long hours. Perceiving his unique devotional spirit and irresistible love the Lord manifested Himself before him. The whole place was illumined with the divine effulgence of His body. Padmanābha saw an ethereal light resembling that of a thousand suns and within it the divine figure of Lord Viṣṇu with four-arms severally bearing a conch, discus, mace and lotus. The devotee felt soothed at heart to see this vision. He began to drink with unwinking eyes the nectarean beauty of the Lord who is an ocean of all sweetness. For those who practise devotion this is a most easy and profound discipline. Loving devotees should, therefore, do well to follow in the footsteps of Padmanābha.

Of the sacred objects worth resorting to in course of the Lord's worship four stand out as the most important, viz., the divine Name of the Lord, His divine Form, His divine sports and His divine abode. What is required, therefore, is that we should make out the virtues, glory, truth and secret of each of these four entities. We must resort to all these four objects at least with our four principal organs, viz., our ears, eyes, mind and speech. The idea is that our ears should be employed in hearing of the virtues, glory, truth, and secret of each of these four objects from the lips of some devotees of the Lord, our eyes in reading what the scriptures say in regard to them, our mind in pondering them and our speech in extolling them and talking of them in the presence of the Lord's devotees. If all these four are resorted to in this manner with reverence and love, one succeeds in realizing God and attains supreme bliss and peace, even-mindedness beyond all limits and real knowledge of the divine truth.

Now, let us discuss briefly the virtues, glory, truth and profound secret of the Divine Name, Form, Sports and Abode. The Divine Name as well is replete with countless divine virtues of God, such as forgiveness, compassion, serenity, love, wisdom, even-mindedness, guilelessness and so on. Just as a tiny seed of a banyan tree, when sown in a fertile soil and carefully watered, grows into a beautiful plant and eventually into a full-grown tree, even so the Divine Name sown in the soil of the heart and fed with water in the form of holding communion with devotees of the Lord and study of the scriptures give rise to the tree of divine virtue. The idea is that by muttering, chanting, hearing and dwelling on the Divine Name the divine virtues of the Lord are naturally manifested in the devotee's heart. These are some of the virtues of the Divine Name.

The practice of muttering the Divine Name and singing, hearing and revolving it in the mind eradicates all the accumulated sins and evil propensities like egotism and attachment, partiality and prejudice, lust and anger, greed and infatuation. It further rids one of immoral habits such as lying, hypocrisy, thieving, committing violence and adultery, drinking and gambling; nay, it ends all sorrow. The worshipper develops all noble virtues and right conduct which qualify him for God-realization. Such is the glory of the Divine Name.

The Lord and His Name are identical; nay, His essential character and Name as well as the knowledge about Him are one and the same. In fact, it is the Lord Himself who stands manifested in the form of His Name. He who understands this, grasps the truth of the Divine Name.

Mental Japa of the Divine Name is a hundred times more efficacious than that carried on with the tongue alone. And if this mental Japa is accompanied with reverence and

love its efficacy becomes infinite; and, further, if it is performed with disinterested love and kept secret it ensures speedy God-realization. He who realizes this secret shall never commit sin on the strength of the Divine Name. Such is the secret of the Divine Name.

The Lord's features, His complexion and form are extremely delicate, lovely, sweet, most charming, splendid, ethereal, brilliant, handsome and wonderful, and He is possessed of surpassing and unique forgiveness, compassion, serenity, love, sense of justice, even-mindedness, affability, guilelessness, generosity and innumerable other such divine characteristics. These are some of the excellences of the Divine personality. Consummate strength, lordship, majesty, power, glory and the capacity to turn the possible into impossible and vice versa and so on—these constitute the illimitable glory of the Lord. The mere sight and touch of the Divine Personality, a talk with Him, nay, His very thought, wipes out all sins and sorrows and all sorts of evil propensities and habits and naturally manifests in the devotee's heart all the noble virtues and good habits, which lead him to God-realization. This sums up the glory of the Lord.

Just as the atoms of water, vapour, fog, frost, clouds, rain-drops, hail-stone and snow etc., are all water in substance, even so, relative or absolute, with form or formless, manifest or unmanifest, sentient or insentient, animate or inanimate, real or fictitious, gross or subtle, cause or effect, whatever there is and all that lies beyond is nothing but the Lord in substance. Such is the reality of the Divine Personality. It is the absolute and formless Supreme Spirit who appears with attributes and form: this secret cannot be known without His grace even to seers and gods, for the Lord remains wrapped in the shroud of His own *Yogamāyā*, one of His powers which He employs

at the time of creation. His true nature is inconceivable, infinite and divine; He is known to Himself alone or can be known by him alone to whom He graciously reveals Himself. In the Dvāpara age when Brahmā stole away the cowherd boys and calves, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself assumed the forms of those boys and calves. Balarāma Himself could not know this secret until Śrī Kṛṣṇa apprised him of the same. No one knew that it was He who appeared in all those forms. Such is the secret of the Divine Personality.

When Vibhīṣaṇa, insulted by Rāvaṇa, sought refuge with Lord Śrī Rāma, the Lord received him with kindness coupled with generosity, compassion, love and affection for His protege. To discover such noble virtues in the conduct of the Lord is to see the excellences of His Līlā.

In the Bālakāṇḍa of Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa we read how the sage Paraśurāma appeared on the scene after the great bow had been snapped by Śrī Rāma and after a fiery exchange of words with Laksmaṇa addressed the Lord in the following strain—

“O Rāma, take this bow of Ramā’s Lord and draw it, so that my doubts may be cleared. Lord and lo ! as Paraśurāma offered his bow it passed into Śrī Rāma’s hands of its own accord, and Paraśurāma felt amazed at this.”

This passing of the bow into the hands of Śrī Rāma of its own accord is a glory of the Lord’s Līlā. And realizing the excellences, glory, truth and secret of the Lord’s Līlā, he who beholds His Līlā, ponders it, reads its stories, hears them or chants them or imitates His Līlā attains final beatitude. This too is a glory of the Lord’s Līlā.

When Brahmā took away the cowherd boys and calves, the Lord Himself appeared as so many boys and calves and enacted this Līlā for a full year. He sportively assumed all these multitudinous forms in the twinkling of an eye. To

realize the sportive nature of His appearing in so many diverse forms as His essential character is to grasp the truth of His Līlā. For the subject, the object and the action—whatever exists is essentially God and God alone. In the same way, to realize that whatever is naturally taking place in the world of today is nothing but a sport of the Lord, which being identical with Him is His very substance, is also one way of grasping the truth of the Lord's Līlā.

We read in the Rāmacaritamānasa that when after His exile of fourteen years Śrī Rāma returned to Ayodhyā, He found that the people were all extremely impatient to meet Him. He, therefore, appeared in countless forms and synchronously met them. The Rāmacaritamānasa says—

“He forthwith appeared in countless forms and in this way the gracious Lord met everybody in an appropriate manner. In a moment the Lord greeted them all; Umā, this was a mystery which none could comprehend.”

The Lord instantly met all at one and the same time, but none could understand this mystery. Everyone thought that the Lord was meeting him alone at that time. This meeting of the Lord with all persons there without letting anyone of them know that He was at the same time meeting the person next to him is a mystery of the Lord's Līlā.

The divine Abode of the Lord, which is spiritual in substance, is supreme, transcendental, eternal and real; it is beyond the ken of mind, intellect and speech. The abiding divine virtues of the Lord such as forgiveness, compassion, serenity, love, even-mindedness, justice and so on are naturally present in the Lord's Abode; for it is the Lord Himself who has assumed the form of His divine Abode. These are some of the excellences of the Divine Abode.

The devotees who attain to that Abode as a reward of their devotion, meditation, fellowship of saints and study of

the scriptures etc., are naturally endowed with almost all the above-mentioned virtues even while they live on earth. If, however, anyone of them is found deficient in any respect for some reason the deficiency is made good the very moment he enters the Supreme Abode. Nay, the blessed one who once ascends to It never returns to this physical plane; on the other hand, he is endowed with a holy form which knows no birth, decay or death, nor any disease or change. Nay, like the Lord Himself, they are divinely spiritual and transcendental and repositories of all noble virtues. Whatever exists in that Abode is divinely spiritual and transcendental in character. This gives some indication of the glory of the supreme Divine Abode.

The Supreme Brahma, who is all truth and bliss solidified, Himself appears in the form of His Abode, hence His Abode is identical with the Lord. To know this is to know the reality of the Lord's Abode.

There in His Abode one comes to know that which was never known before, experiences things that were never experienced and sees sights hitherto unseen; for as soon as one reaches that highest realm the mind, intellect and senses all turn divine. And the excellences, glory, truth and secret of the Lord and His Abode as well as His Līlās there are quite different from what we hear of them. As soon as one goes there one can fully understand what in truth the Lord and His Abode are. This constitutes the mystery of the Lord's Supreme Abode.

A man who follows a particular course of spiritual discipline after obtaining an insight into the virtues, glory, reality and secret of the Lord and His Name etc., is blessed with a vision of his chosen deity. The heights of ecstasy to which he attains at that time is unique; he gets transported with love, joy and wonder. He loses consciousness of

everything else than the Lord, so much so that he totally forgets himself and fixes his unwinking gaze on the Lord. His serenity knows no bounds and he acquires a wonderful state of even-mindedness. He comes to realize the true nature and glory of the Supreme Brahma, who is both relative and absolute, with form and formless, manifest and unmanifest. He is then rid once for all of all doubt, error, ignorance and sins and nothing remains to be done or known by him.

Hence with a view to God-realization we should practise exclusive devotion to the Lord with faith and diligence in a disinterested spirit till the last moment of our life.



Forms of Worship in the Gītā

There are two forms of worship mentioned in the Gītā—one in terms of diversity and the other in terms of identity. The former falls under the category of Yoga, while the latter is included in Sāṅkhya. Worship in terms of diversity has also been referred to by the name of Bhaktiyoga and that in terms of identity under the name of Jñānayoga, which has also been termed as 'Parā-Niṣṭhā' of Jñāna, the highest consummation of the path of Knowledge. By worship in terms of diversity is meant devotion to God. Such devotion is found mentioned at some places in the Gītā in the form of worship of God with attributes and possessed of a form (IX.26, 34; XI. 54) and at other places as consisting in the worship of God with attributes but without a form (VIII. 9-10; IX. 4-5; XVIII. 62). There are a number of verses which do not clearly show whether they refer to God with form or to the formless Divinity (II. 61; VI. 14; VII. 14; and VIII.5). A devotee can according to his choice worship in terms of diversity God in His Saguṇa aspect with or without form or God possessed of a form and yet all-pervading in His formless aspect. Worship in terms of identity means true knowledge of the absolute formless Brahma—who is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss solidified—as identical with oneself; in other words, it means the negation of everything other than Brahma and the realization that all that exists is Brahma.

Worship in Terms of Diversity

We find in the Gītā a number of verses bearing on worship in terms of diversity. There is not a single chapter

in the Gītā which does not convey the idea of Devotion in terms of diversity. The first discourse of the Gītā, of course, contains no verse clearly referring to worship in terms of diversity; yet the words of Arjuna breathe to some extent a spirit of devotion. Arjuna says to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa; “O immortal Lord ! be pleased to place my chariot in the middle of the two armies” (I.21). Appellations like ‘Hṛṣīkeśa’, ‘Mādhava’ and ‘Acyuta’ used in this first discourse refer to the Lord. And the vocative forms in which Arjuna devoutly addresses the Lord indicate the devotion of his heart.

In verse 61 of Discourse II the Lord Himself clearly says: ‘युक्त आसीत मत्परः’ “That is to say, one should devote oneself to the Lord with a collected mind.”

Similarly, in verse 30 of Discourse III the Lord says: ‘मयि सर्वाणि कर्माणि संन्यस्याध्यात्मचेतसा’—“Resign all your duties to Me with your mind fixed on Me.” The Lord enjoins Arjuna to fight in accordance with the duty of a Kṣatriya with no interested motive. The lesson that we should derive from the aforesaid words of the Lord is that we ought to do our prescribed duties in a disinterested spirit according to our respective grade in society and stage in life and in a spirit of dedication to the Lord and remaining absorbed in meditation all the time.

Verses 6 to 9 of Discourse IV discuss the doctrine of the Lord’s descent on earth, which is the bed-rock of worship in terms of diversity. Later, in verse 10 of the same discourse it is stated that one can attain identity with God through dependence on God with attributes and possessed of a form. The Lord says—

वीतरागभयक्रोधा मन्मया मामुपाश्रिताः ।
बहवो ज्ञानतपसा पूता मद्दावमागताः ॥

(IV.10)
“Completely rid of passion, fear and anger, wholly absorbed

in Me, depending on Me, and purified by the penance of wisdom, many have become one with Me even in the past."

The Lord further tells us in verse 11 that howsoever men seek Him, even so does He approach them. The moral that we should draw from this is that we should not think of anyone other than the Lord even for a moment. Like the celebrated Gopīs * of Vraja we should uninterruptedly remember the Lord, the Enchanter of all hearts, regarding Him as present with us at all times—whether we are walking or standing, eating or drinking, sleeping or awake.

In Discourse V too, verse 29 contains a significant reference to Devotion, i.e., worship in terms of diversity. It tells us of worship in the form of knowing in reality the Lord's excellences and glory. The Lord says—

भोक्तारं यज्ञतपसां सर्वलोकमहेश्वरम् ।
सुहृदं सर्वभूतानां ज्ञात्वा मां शान्तिमृच्छति ॥

"Having known Me in reality as the enjoyer of all sacrifices and austerities, the Supreme Lord of all the worlds and the disinterested friend of all beings, My devotee attains peace."

From this it follows that if a man comes to realize Śrī Bhagavān as the enjoyer of all sacrifices and austerities, the Supreme Lord of all the worlds and the well-wisher of all beings, he attains God in the form of Supreme Peace. And

* या दोहनेऽवहने मथनोपलेपप्रेष्ट्वा र्भुवनार्भरुदितोक्षणमार्जनादौ ।

गायन्ति चैनमनुरक्तधियोऽश्रुकण्ठयो धन्या व्रजस्त्रिय उरुक्रमचित्तयानाः ॥

(Śrīmad Bhāgavata X. 44.15)

"Blessed indeed are the women of Vraja who, while milking, pounding their unhusked rice, churning their curds, smearing their floor with the cow's dung, rocking their cradles, lullabying their weeping infants, sprinkling with water and cleaning their floor and so on, sing the praises of Śrī Kṛṣṇa with a devoted and loving heart, their throat choked and eyes bedimmed with tears (on account of excessive emotion), and their mind completely absorbed in Him."

when once a devotee comes to know Him in reality as possessed of all virtues, the Lord's excellences like friendliness to all automatically manifest themselves in him. While discussing the distinguishing marks of saintly devotees in verses 12 to 19 of Discourse XII of the Gītā, the Lord clearly refers to friendliness and the other virtues possessed by His devotees in such words as 'अद्वेष्या सर्वभूतानां मैत्रः करुण एव च'—“he (the devotee) is free from malice towards all beings, friendly and compassionate.” Therefore, devotees of God should spare no pains to know Him in reality.

Verses 10 to 14 of Discourse VI describe the process of worshipping God in terms of diversity after taking his seat in a secluded and undefiled spot. Verse 14 tells us the actual process of worship in the following words—

प्रशान्तात्मा विगतभीर्ब्ल्लिचारिक्रते स्थितः ।
मनः संयम्य मच्चित्तो युक्त आसीत मत्परः ॥

"Firm in the vow of complete chastity and fearless, keeping himself perfectly calm and with the mind held in restraint and fixed on Me, the vigilant Yogi should sit absorbed in Me."

Verses 30 and 31 teach us how to practise uninterrupted devotion to the all-pervading God with attributes while carrying on our worldly transactions.

Similarly, while praising the man who is engaged in practising devotion to the formless Divinity with attributes, the Lord declares him in the concluding verse (verse 47) of the same discourse as the best of all strivers—

योगिनामपि सर्वेषां मद्गतेनान्तरात्मना ।
श्रद्धावान्भजते यो मां स मे युक्ततमो मतः ॥

"Of all Yogis, again, he who devoutly worships Me with his mind focussed on Me is considered by Me to be the best Yogi."

This should inspire the reader to emulate such a Sādhaka, whom the Lord pronounces as the best of all Yogīs—and to follow till the end of his life the procedure laid down in the above verse.

The next six discourses viz., Discourses VII to XII are recognized by the learned commentators of the Gītā as forming what is known as the Upāsanākāṇḍa (the portion mainly treating of Upāsanā or worship of God); and they are but right in regarding them as such. For it is worship of the Saguna Divinity with or without form that covers almost the entire range of these chapters. Most of the verses in these discourses contain words referring to the Lord and revealing the spirit of Devotion, e.g., the pronouns 'त्वम्' (You), 'त्वाम्' (You), 'तव' (Your) etc., used with reference to the Lord by Arjuna and 'अहम्' (I), 'माम्' (Me), 'मयि' (in Me), 'मम' (Mine) etc., employed by the Lord with reference to His own Self. Without dwelling on these in detail we shall content ourselves with a passing reference to a few verses dealing with worship in terms of diversity.

Undertaking in the very beginning of Discourse VII to enlighten Arjuna on the subject of worship of His integral Self, the Lord discusses it at more than one place. The discourse is concluded by glorifying in verses 29 and 30 those who are engaged in worshipping in terms of diversity God, who is both with and without form, Saguna as well as Nirguna.

Besides, in verse 14 of the same discourse is declared that worship in the form of dependence on God is the only way to cross the formidable Māyā, consisting of the three Guṇas (modes of Prakṛti). Verses 16 and 17 classify the devotees into four types and particularly glorify the disinterested, loving and enlightened devotee. From this it follows that in order to cross the ocean of metempsychosis

we should practise disinterested and loving devotion to the integral Divinity with attributes, completely surrendering ourselves to Him.

Further, in verse 5 of Discourse VIII is described the glory of remembering God at the last moment of one's life; and verses 7 and 14 glorify constant remembrance of God. Verses 8 to 10 and 22 tell us how to worship the Saguṇa yet formless and all-pervading yet transcendental aspect of God. A man, therefore, should worship God with or without form or His integral being, regarding Him as his sole Master and ever thinking of Him with reverence and devotion.

Verses 4 to 6 of Discourse IX explain the mystery and truth of the formless aspect of God. And verses 30 to 31 declare that even the vilest sinner is speedily delivered by virtue of exclusive devotion. The Lord says—

अपि चेत्सुदुराचारो भजते मामनन्यभाक् ।
साधुरेव स मन्तव्यः सम्यग्व्यवसितो हि सः ॥
क्षिप्रं भवति धर्मात्मा शश्वच्छान्ति निगच्छति ।
कौन्तेय प्रति जानीहि न मे भक्तः प्रणश्यति ॥

“Even if the vilest sinner worships Me with exclusive devotion, he should be accounted a saint; for he has rightly resolved (He is positive in his belief that there is nothing like devoted worship of God).”

“Speedily he becomes virtuous and secures lasting peace. Know it for certain, Arjuna, that My devotee never falls.”

After declaring in verse 32 that self-surrender to the Lord secures the highest destiny to women, the Vaiśyas (members of the agricultural and mercantile classes), the Śūdras (those belonging to the artisan and labouring classes) and even to those of sinful birth, the Lord discusses in verse 34 the true character of self-surrender to God with attributes

and possessed of a form, and tells us how He is attained through such surrender. He says—

मन्मना भव मद्दक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु ।
मामेवैष्यसि युक्त्वैवमात्मानं मत्परायणः ॥

“Fix your mind on Me, be devoted to Me, worship Me and make obeisance to Me; thus linking yourself with Me and entirely depending on Me, you shall come to Me.”

It may be asked here whether the Lord can be attained only by following all the four methods of surrender delineated above or by practising even one or two of them. Our reply to this is that the Lord can be reached by following even one or two of the four limbs of surrender to Him; and if anyone follows all the four methods at one and the same time, there can be nothing like it.

Verse 22 embodies the Lord’s vow of personally supplying the needs and safeguarding the interests of the devotee who constantly remembers Him with single-minded devotion. This makes it clear that the precept ‘मन्मना भव’ (fix your mind on Me) alone is enough to redeem us, if it is followed in right earnest.

In verses 30 and 31, quoted above, the Lord assures us that even the vilest sinner is redeemed through exclusive devotion and that His devotee never falls. This should be taken to mean that one can be delivered even by following the precept ‘मद्दक्तो भव’ (be devoted to Me), that is, through mere devotion to the Lord.

Verse 26 of the same discourse contains the Lord’s assurance that He appears in person before His worshipper to partake of a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water offered by him with love. From this it is clear that one can attain the Lord through mere loving worship according to the precept ‘मद्याजी भव’ (worship Me).

In verse 14 of this very discourse the Lord says : “Ever

united with Me, My devotees worship Me, bowing to Me with reverence." Thus God can be attained merely by reverently bowing to Him according to the precept 'मां नमस्कुरु' (make obeisance to Me).

It may be asked here: If God can be attained by following anyone of the four methods described above, how is it that the Lord prescribed as many as four methods for the same? We submit in this connection that the practice of all the four methods brings in its wake a peculiar joy and peace of mind even during the period of Sādhanā and enables one to realize God speedily and without much exertion. Therefore, we should do our utmost to practise all the four methods inculcated in the concluding verse of Discourse IX.

There are many other verses, bearing on Devotion, in this discourse; but we refrain from dwelling on them lest the article should become too lengthy.

In verse 3 of Discourse X the Lord extols the man who knows in reality His essential nature and glory. And in verses 9 and 10 the Lord tells us the mode of worship practised by His devotees and how it leads to His realization. The Lord says—

मच्चित्ता मद्गतप्राणा बोधयन्तः परस्परम् ।
कथयन्तश्च मां नित्यं तुष्यन्ति च रमन्ति च ॥
तेषां सततयुक्तानां भजतां प्रीतिपूर्वकम् ।
ददामि बुद्धियोगं तं येन मामुपयान्ति ते ॥

"With their mind fixed on Me, and their lives surrendered to Me, nay, enlightening one another about My greatness and speaking of Me, My devotees ever remain contented and take delight in Me."

"On those ever united through meditation with Me and worshipping Me with love, I confer that Yoga of wisdom through which they come to Me."

In this discourse the Lord further describes His principal divine manifestations and glory, the knowledge of whose truth and secret serves to develop one's faith in and love for worship of the Lord and intensifies one's spiritual practice.

Discourse XI is devoted to a detailed description of the Lord's glory as well as of the praises and prayer offered by Arjuna to Him. By grasping the full significance and secret of all this one can develop supreme faith and exclusive devotion and thereby attain God-realization. Describing in verse 54 the glory of exclusive devotion, the Lord tells us the true nature of such devotion in verse 55—

भक्त्या त्वनन्यया शक्य अहमेवंविधोऽर्जुन ।
 ज्ञातुं द्रष्टुं च तत्त्वेन प्रवेष्टुं च परन्तप ॥
 मत्कर्मकृन्मत्परमो मद्भक्तः सङ्गवर्जितः ।
 निवैरः सर्वभूतेषु यः स मामेति पाण्डव ॥

“Through single-minded devotion, however, I can be seen in this form (with four-arms), nay, known in essence and even entered into, O valiant Arjuna.”

“Arjuna, he who performs all his duties for My sake, depends on Me, is devoted to Me, has no attachment and is free from malice towards all beings, reaches Me.”

Hence we should strive hard for God-realization according to the procedure delineated in Discourses X and XI. We should also grasp the substance and secret of the Lord's glory and the praises and prayer offered to Him by Arjuna, as well as of the Divine manifestations and the Yogic power of the Lord as discussed in these two discourses, so that our faith in and love for God may grow and our spiritual practice be intensified so as to enable us to attain God speedily.

As for Discourse XII, the whole of it is permeated with the spirit of devotion. After discussing devotion to God, the

discourse proceeds to describe the marks of those who have attained God (through such Devotion). In reply to Arjuna's query the Lord pronounces in verse 2 of this discourse worship of God with form and attributes as the best—

मध्यावेश्य मनो ये मां नित्ययुक्ता उपासते ।

श्रद्धया परयोपेतास्ते मे युक्ततमा मताः ॥

“I consider them to be the best of Yogīs, who, endowed with supreme faith and ever united (through meditation) with Me, worship Me with their mind centred on Me.”

In verses 6 and 7 the Lord delineates the procedure of worshipping God in His Saguna aspect and proclaims that He speedily takes such a worshipper across the ocean of worldly existence—

ये तु सर्वाणि कर्माणि मयि संन्यस्य मत्पराः ।

अनन्येनैव योगेन मां ध्यायन्त उपासते ॥

तेषामहं समुद्धर्ता मृत्युसंसारसागरात् ।

भवामि नचिरात्पार्थ मध्यावेशितचेतसाम् ॥

“On the other hand, those who depending exclusively on Me and surrendering all actions to Me, adore Me (God with attributes), constantly meditating on Me with single-minded devotion.”

“These, Arjuna, I speedily deliver from the ocean of birth and death, their mind being fixed on Me.”

Thereafter, in verse 8 the Lord expressly commands Arjuna to fix his mind and intellect on Him, assuring him that he will undoubtedly realize Him thereby. Therefore, if we are incapable of doing anything else, let us at least strive hard to keep our mind and intellect ever fixed on God.

Jñānayoga has not been discussed so fully in the other discourses of the Gītā as in Discourses XIII to XVIII. Hence this sextet may be characterized as mainly dealing with Jñānayoga. Yet there is a reference even here to

worship in terms of diversity as a means to the attainment of Jñāna. In verse 10 of Discourse XIII the Lord says—

मयि चानन्ययोगेन भक्तिरव्यभिचारिणी ।

विविक्तदेशसेवित्वमरतिर्जनसंसदि ॥

“Unflinching devotion to Me through exclusive attachment, living in seclusion and holy places and finding no enjoyment in the company of men.”

The practice of exclusive devotion mentioned above brings in its wake true wisdom which easily enables us to realize God, who is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss combined.

While discussing the means of rising above the three Guṇas (modes of Prakṛti), the Lord says in verse 26 of Discourse XIV—

मां च योऽव्यभिचारेण भक्तियोगेन सेवते ।

स गुणान्समतीत्यैतान्ब्रह्मभूयाय कल्पते ॥

“He too who constantly worships Me through the Yoga of exclusive devotion, transcending these three Guṇas and becomes qualified for attaining Brahma.”

This makes it quite clear that a man transcends the three Guṇas and becomes fit for God-realization by practising the Yoga of exclusive devotion. Hence even in the discourses dealing with Jñānayoga we find references to the Yoga of exclusive Devotion, i.e., worship in terms of diversity, as accessory to the same. Asked by Arjuna how to rise above the three Guṇas, the Lord declared unswerving devotion to Him as a means to this end too. Therefore, those who are striving to achieve Jñānayoga should cultivate exclusive devotion to God for perfection in that Yoga. Through unflinching devotion one can attain success not only in Jñānayoga but can also transcend the three Guṇas and become one with Brahma, who is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss solidified.

In Discourse XV devotion to God has been pronounced

as the foremost means of attaining the highest goal. In verse 4 of this discourse the striver has been asked to worship God according to the following sentiment—

तमेव चाद्यं पुरुषं प्रपद्ये यतः प्रवृत्तिः प्रसृता पुराणी ॥

“I take refuge exclusively in that most ancient Person (God Nārāyaṇa) from whom the flow of this beginningless creation has progressed.”

Further on the Lord impresses on us even more explicitly the glory of the integral Divinity or the Supreme Person and lays emphasis on our doing constant and uninterrupted worship to Him with the whole of our being. He says—

यो मामेवमसंमूढो जानाति पुरुषोत्तमम् ।
स सर्वविद्धजति मां सर्वभावेन भारत ॥

“Arjuna, the wise man who thus realizes Me as the Supreme Person—knowing all, he constantly worships Me (the all-pervading Lord) with his whole being.”

This leads us to the conclusion that the test of a man who recognizes the Lord as Puruṣottama, the Supreme Person, lies in his adoring the Lord exclusively in everyway. It, therefore, becomes incumbent on us to realize the truth that there is no one superior to God.

Though the sixteenth discourse is not mainly devoted to a discussion of Bhakti (Devotion), it describes in the opening three verses, the divine legacy (Daivī-Sampadā) in continuation, as it were, of verse 13 of Discourse IX, in which it was stated that exalted souls rich in divine virtues worship God with exclusive devotion. The compound word ‘ज्ञानयोगव्यवस्थितिः’ occurring in the very first verse of this discourse can be interpreted to mean constant absorption of mind in the thought of God. Similarly, the word 'Svādhyāya' denotes a study of the Vedas and other scriptures helpful to God-realization as well as the chanting of God's names and praises. Hence these verses can be taken as hinting at Devotion.

Verses 23 to 27 of Discourse XVII mention the divine names, 'Om Tat Sat' and while explaining the various senses in which they are used, the Lord lays it down that all pious acts should be preceded by the utterance of God's names and performed only for His sake, thus inculcating nothing but worship in terms of diversity.

As for Discourse XVIII, it discusses practically all the courses of spiritual discipline such as Karmayoga, Bhaktiyoga, Jñanayoga and so on. Verse 46 tells us that perfection can be reached by worshipping God through the performance of one's own duties. In verse 56 the Lord unequivocally declares that he who performs his duties depending on Him, attains by His grace the eternal, imperishable state, even though performing all actions. Thereafter the Lord commands Arjuna to practise absolute dependence on Him—

चेतसा सर्वकर्माणि मयि संन्यस्य मत्यरः ।
बुद्धियोगमुपाश्रित्य मच्यतः सततं भव ॥

(57)

"Mentally resigning all your duties to Me and taking recourse to Yoga in the form of even-mindedness, be solely devoted to Me and constantly give your mind to Me."

Nay, pointing out to Arjuna the way of self-surrender in verse 65 of the same discourse as in verse 34 of Discourse IX, the Lord explicitly exhorts Arjuna in verse 66 to take refuge in Him alone—

सर्वधर्मान्यरित्यन्यं मामेकं शरणं द्रज ।
अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥

"Resigning all your duties to Me, the all-powerful and all-supporting Lord, take refuge in Me alone. I shall absolve you of all sins; worry not."

This is the final teaching of the Lord to Arjuna. It behoves us, therefore, to seek refuge with the Lord in everyone in accordance with the spirit of verses 65 and 66

of Discourse XVIII. This is what constitutes the worship in terms of diversity of God in His Saguṇa aspect. This again is what they call Bhaktiyoga. In the Gītā the Lord has repeatedly inculcated on Arjuna the practice of this form of worship under the name of exclusive devotion.

Worship in Terms of Identity

So far we have dealt with worship in terms of diversity in the Gītā. Now we proceed to present a passing view of worship in terms of identity. Worship in terms of identity is very exalted indeed. The Lord has discussed in the Gītā worship in terms of diversity and that in terms of identity as two distinct paths meant for spiritual aspirants of diverse spiritual levels. Some Ācāryas point out references to worship in terms of identity in every Adhyāya of the Gītā, but to my mind there are no clear references to such worship in every discourse. Worship in terms of identity has been discussed in the Gītā under the names of Sāṅkhyayoga, Samnyāsa and Jñānayoga as well.

From verses 11 to 30 of Discourse II the doctrine of monism has been set forth under the name of 'Sāṅkhyayoga'. The Lord says—

नासतो विद्यते भावो नाभावो विद्यते सतः ।
उभयोरपि दृष्टोऽन्तस्त्वनयोस्तत्त्वदर्शिभिः ॥

(Gītā II.16)

"The unreal has no existence and the real never ceases to be; the reality of both has thus been perceived by the seers of truth."

The above verse recognizes two categories—the real and the unreal. In this context the embodied soul has been referred to under the name of 'Ātmā' (the soul) and spoken of as ever-existent, real, actionless and immutable; while the body has been declared as perishable and mortal. Thus it has been concluded that the soul, being ever-existent,

motionless and immutable, is real (Sat), while the body, being perishable, transient and ephemeral, is unreal (Asat). Here the soul and the Oversoul having not been separately mentioned, their oneness appears to be suggested. The soul and the Oversoul are not two distinct entities according to the view-point of Jñāna (Self-knowledge). The Lord has hinted at this in verse 20 of Discourse XVIII, while characterizing Sāttvika knowledge—

सर्वभूतेषु येनैकं भावमव्ययमीक्षते ।
अविभक्तं विभक्तेषु तज्जानं विद्धि सात्त्विकम् ॥

“That by which man perceives one imperishable divine existence as undivided and equally present in all individual beings, know that knowledge to be Sāttvika.”

The Lord declares in verse 3 of Discourse III—

लोकेऽस्मिन्द्विविधा निष्ठा पुरा प्रोक्ता मयानघ ।
ज्ञानयोगेन सांख्यानां कर्मयोगेन योगिनाम् ॥

“Arjuna, in this world two courses of Sādhanā (spiritual discipline) have been enunciated by Me in the past. In the case of the Sāṅkhyayogī, the Sādhanā proceeds along the path of knowledge; whereas in the case of the Karmayogī, it proceeds along the path of Action.”

By stating in the above verse that the course of spiritual discipline for the Sāṅkhyas has already been pointed out by Him as lying along the path of knowledge, the Lord evidently refers to verses 11 to 30 of Discourse II. Further, while describing the characteristics of the man who has realized God as one with him, the Lord says in verse 17 of this very discourse (Discourse III)—

यस्त्वात्मरतिरेव स्यादात्मतृप्तश्च मानवः ।
आत्मन्येव च संतुष्टस्तस्य कार्यं न विद्यते ॥

“He, however, who takes delight in the Self alone and is gratified with the Self, has no duty to perform.”

And in verse 28 He says—

तत्त्ववित्तु महाबाहो गुणकर्मविभागयोः ।
गुणा गुणेषु वर्तन्त इति मत्वा न सज्जते ॥

“He, however, who has true insight into the respective spheres of the Guṇas (modes of Prakṛti) and their actions, holding that it is the Guṇas (in the shape of the senses, mind etc.) that move among the Guṇas (objects of perception), does not get attached to them, Arjuna.”

Here by declaring the knower of Truth as a non-doer, the Lord clearly refers to the doctrine of Jñānayoga.

Verse 24 of Discourse IV exhorts us to look upon all as Brahma, by speaking in a symbolic way of everything connected with sacrifice as Brahma. The Lord says—

ब्रह्मार्पणं ब्रह्म हविर्ब्रह्माग्नौ ब्रह्मणा हुतम् ।
ब्रह्मैव तेन गत्व्यं ब्रह्मकर्मसमाधिना ॥

“In the practice of seeing Brahma everywhere which in itself is a form of sacrifice, Brahma is the ladle (with which an oblation is poured into the fire) etc., Brahma, again, is the oblation; Brahma is the fire, Brahma itself the sacrificer and so Brahma itself constitutes the act of pouring the oblation into the fire and finally Brahma is the goal to be reached by him who is absorbed in Brahma as the act of such sacrifice.”

Again, in the latter half of verse 25 it is stated—

ब्रह्माग्नावपरे यज्ञं यज्ञेनैवोपजुह्वति ॥

“Others pour into the fire of Brahma the very sacrifice in the shape of the self through the sacrifice known as the perception of identity.”

Here by referring to those who immolate their individual self into the fire of Brahma, it has been shown that there are many who merge their soul in the Oversoul, who is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss solidified, or, in other words, realize Brahma in terms of identity.

In this way the oneness of the individual soul and the Oversoul has been shown in the above context.

In verses 34 and 35 of Discourse IV the Lord urges Arjuna to approach an enlightened sage in order to attain knowledge of oneness of the soul with Brahma—

तद् विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया ।
 उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥
 यज्ञात्वा न पुनर्भूमेवं यास्यसि पाण्डव ।
 येन भूतान्यशेषेण द्रक्ष्यस्यात्मन्यथो मयि ॥

“Understand the true nature of that knowledge by approaching illumined souls. If you prostrate at their feet, render them service and question them with an open and guileless heart, those wise seers of Truth will instruct you in that knowledge. Arjuna, when you have reached enlightenment, ignorance will delude you no more. In the light of that knowledge you will see the entire creation first within yourself, and then in Me (the Oversoul).”

Therefore, those who are qualified for the practice of Jñānayoga, who have faith in and a predilection for the same, should resort to such wise seers and being instructed by them into the truth and secret of Jñānayoga, proceed with their Sādhanā accordingly.

In verses 8, 9 and 13 of Discourse V the Lord proceeds to point out the characteristics of a Sāṅkhyayogī seer in order to show how one should continue the practice of Sāṅkhyayoga in the course of one’s dealings with the world. Verse 17 points out how a Jñānayogī carries on his worship when he takes to meditation in a sequestered place. There it is stated that by merging the mind, intellect and soul to Brahma, they attain the Absolute, who is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss solidified, in the form of cessation of rebirth.

तद्बुद्ध्यस्तदात्मानस्तन्ष्ठास्तत्परायणः ।
गच्छन्त्यपुनरावृत्तिं ज्ञाननिर्धूतकल्पषाः ॥

“Those whose mind and intellect are wholly merged in Him, who remain constantly established in identity with Him and who have become one with Him, their sins being wiped out by wisdom, reach the state whence there is no return.”

Verse 24 tells us that the Sāṅkhyayogī who is established in identity with Brahma, who revels in the Self and enjoys the highest bliss as well as the light of wisdom in the Self attains Brahma, who is all peace—

योऽन्तःसुखोऽन्तरारामस्तथान्तज्योतिरेव यः ।
स योगी ब्रह्मनिर्वाणं ब्रह्मभूतोऽधिगच्छति ॥

“He who is happy within himself, enjoys within himself the delight of the soul and even so is illumined by the inner light (light of the soul)—such a Yogi (Sāṅkhyayogī), identified with Brahma, attains Brahma, who is all peace.”

Verses 25 and 26 also declare that Brahma, who is all peace, is attained as a result of contemplation on the attributeless and formless Divinity, who is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss solidified. At several other places in the fifth discourse we are told that worship of the formless Divinity leads to the realization of the transcendent Brahma.

Verses 18 to 26 of Discourse VI tell us how to practise worship in terms of identity of the attributeless and formless Brahma while carrying on our worldly transactions as well as in seclusion. And in verses 27-28 we are told how the Jñānayogī established in identity with Brahma, who is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss solidified, realizes without effort the transcendent Absolute, who is no other than

infinite Bliss. Pointing out the means to this realization, verse 29 declares that the man who is united in identity with the all-pervading infinite Consciousness and sees unity everywhere beholds the Self present in all beings as water in ice and all beings in the Self as a mere projection of his thought.

Discourses VII to XII, as a matter of fact, mainly concern themselves with worship in terms of diversity. Verses dealing with worship in terms of identity in these discourses are few and far between. Yet utterances such as 'all that exists is no other than God' (vide verse 19 of Discourse VII) can be taken as a clue to the practice of worship in terms of identity—

बहूनां जन्मनामन्ते ज्ञानवान् मां प्रपद्यते ।
वासुदेवः सर्वमिति स महात्मा सुदुर्लभः ॥

"In the very last of all births the enlightened soul worships Me, realizing that all this is God; such a noble soul is very rare."

Discourse VIII speaks of identity of the individual soul with the Oversoul when it tells us that even on the cessation of everything else the transcendent Brahma, who is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss, does not cease to be.

परस्तस्मात् भावोऽन्योऽव्यक्तोऽव्यक्तात् सनातनः ।
यः स सर्वेषु भूतेषु नश्यत्सु न विनश्यति ॥

(VIII. 20)

"Far beyond even this unmanifest, there is yet another unmanifest existence, that Supreme Divine Person, who does not perish even though all beings perish."

Verse 15 of Discourse IX refers to worship in terms of identity under the name of Jñāna-Yajña.

ज्ञानयज्ञेन चाप्यन्ये यजन्तो मामुपासते ।
एकत्वेन पृथक्त्वेन बहुधा विश्वतोमुखम् ॥

“Others (who follow the path of knowledge) betake themselves to Me through their offering of knowledge, worshipping Me (in My absolute, formless aspect) as one with themselves; while still others worship Me in My Universal Form in many ways, taking Me to be diverse in diverse celestial forms.”

Winding up the topic of divine glories in Discourse X, the Lord says in verse 39 that there is no creature—animate or inanimate other than Him, that is to say, everything is a manifestation of the Lord Himself. Here there is an indication of identity of the individual soul with the Oversoul.

Similarly, while extolling the Lord in Discourse XI, Arjuna, says in verse 37, “You are that which is existent (Sat), that which is not existent (Asat) and also that which is beyond both,” and again in verse 40, “O soul of all, You pervade all; therefore, You are all.” Sentiments such as those expressed in the words “You are all” occurring in the above eulogy uttered by Arjuna adumbrate worship in terms of identity; but, of course, there is no clear reference to such worship.

Verses 3 and 4 of Discourse XII describe the nature of the formless and attributeless Brahma, who is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss solidified and show that worship of the same in terms of identity leads to the realization of God; while in verse 5 it is stated that it is difficult for those identified with the body to realize the attributeless and formless Brahma through worship in terms of identity.

In Discourse XIII Sāṅkhyayoga or Jñānayoga has been particularly dealt with. Pointing out ‘अध्यात्मज्ञाननित्यत्वम्’ or fixity in Self-knowledge as a mode of worship in terms of identity in verse 11, the Lord proceeds to describe in the 12th the nature of the indescribable absolute formless Brahma as follows—

अनादिमत्परं ब्रह्म न सत्त्वासदुच्यते ॥

“That Supreme Brahma, who is the lord of beginningless entities, is said to be neither Sat (being) nor Asat (non-being).”

In the 15th it is stated—

बहिरन्तश्च भूतानामचरं चरमेव च ।

“It exists without and within all beings, and constitutes the animate and inanimate creation as well.”

In this way the Lord refers here to worship in terms of diversity of God in His universal aspect. The statement—

अविभक्तं च भूतेषु विभक्तमिव च स्थितम् ।

“Though integral like space in Its individual aspect, It appears divided as it were in all animate and inanimate beings.”

In verse 16 establishes the oneness of the individual soul and the Oversoul like that of ether enclosed in a pot with the all-pervading ether. And by declaring in the 27th that the Supreme Spirit does not perish even when all beings perish, the Lord seeks to convey that the transcendent Brahma or Oversoul, who is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss solidified, persists even when all cease to exist. In this way worship in terms of identity has been adumbrated here. The Lord says—

समं सर्वेषु भूतेषु तिष्ठन्तं परमेश्वरम् ।

विनश्यत्स्वविनश्यन्तं यः पश्यति स पश्यति ॥

“He alone truly sees, who sees the Supreme Lord as imperishable and abiding equally in all perishable things, both animate and inanimate.”

Pointing out the reward of seeing God as equally present in all in the 28th and the great value of perceiving the Self as the non-doer in the 29th and declaring in the 30th that the Supreme Spirit alone is both the efficient and

the material cause of the universe, or, in other words, that all that exists is Brahma, the Lord proceeds to tell us that God-realization is the reward of such course of discipline. The Lord says—

यदा

भूतपृथग्भावमेकस्थमनुपश्यति ।

तत एव च विस्तारं ब्रह्म सम्पद्यते तदा ॥

“The moment man perceives the diversified existence of beings as rooted in the one Supreme Spirit, and the spreading forth of all beings from the same, that very moment he attains Brahma (who is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss solidified).”

Similarly, in other verses too of this discourse worship in terms of identity of the attributeless and formless Brahma has been discussed. While discussing the above discipline, the Lord declares in verse 34, which is the concluding verse of this discourse, that the reward of this discipline is the realization of the transcendent Brahma or Oversoul as one with the striver.

Undertaking to discuss the wisdom which is the best of all wisdoms, the Lord says in the very opening verse of Discourse XIV that by acquiring this wisdom one attains the highest perfection in the shape of realization of the transcendent Brahma or Oversoul. Again, in verse 19 the soul has been declared as the seer or witness and God-realization is stated to be the reward of knowing the truth of that attributeless Divinity. This form of worship is practised while carrying on one's worldly transactions by establishing oneself in identity with the transcendent Brahma or Oversoul, who is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss solidified. And in verse 20 we are told that the reward of such worship is the realization of God, who is an embodiment of supreme bliss, which has been referred to here under the name of Amṛta or Immortality.

The statement in verse 10 of Discourse XV that only those endowed with the eye of wisdom are able to realize the Self, hints at the realization of the soul in terms of identity.

The compound word 'ज्ञानयोगव्यवस्थितिः,' in the opening verse of Discourse XVI has been interpreted to mean 'constant fixity in meditation on God' from the point of view of Devotion. From the monistic point of view, however, the word can also be taken to mean 'fixity in Jñānayoga i.e., Sāṅkhyayoga'. As a matter of fact, the theme of Discourse XVI is not intended to emphasize either of the two forms of worship in particular. There the first three verses catalogue the divine virtues in order that they may be cultivated, while the fourth briefly enumerates the demoniac properties in order that they may be renounced. In this connection the Lord says in verse 5—

दैवी सम्पद् विमोक्षाय निबन्धायासुरी मता ।
मा शुचः सम्पदं दैवीमभिजातोऽसि पाण्डव ॥

“The divine gift has been recognized as conducive to liberation, and the demoniac gift as conducive to bondage. Grieve not, Arjuna; for you are born with the divine endowment.”

Hereafter there follows a detailed description of the demoniac properties in verses 6 to 21.

Discourse XVII mainly deals with 'Śraddhā' (faith or reverence); hence worship in terms of identity does not appear to be its theme. Discourse XVIII discusses at length worship in terms of identity. Verses 13 to 40 of that discourse enumerate the factors contributing to actions from the point of view of Sāṅkhyayoga and the non-doership of the soul, and classifies knowledge, action and the doer under three heads—Sāttvika, Rājasika and Tāmasika. Of these, verse 16 denounces the man who regards the pure spirit as the doer; the 17th pronounces the man who does

not appropriate to himself the doership of actions as free from blemish; and the 20th declares that the individual soul and the Oversoul are one. Describing the characteristics of Sāttvika action and the Sāttvika doer, the Lord shows in verses 23 and 26 that he who practises Jñānayoga does not claim to be the doer of actions.

Verse 49 of this very discourse tells us that through the practice of Sāṅkhyayoga, referred to here under the name of 'Samnyāsa', one can attain God-realization in the form of the highest consummation of actionlessness. And undertaking in the 50th to detail the process by which one can realize the supreme Brahma through worship in terms of identity, which process He terms as "the highest consummation of Jñānayoga (निष्ठा ज्ञानस्य या परा)," the Lord briefly yet clearly lays down the process in verses 51 to 55. Here we find described, from the point of view of Sāṅkhyayoga, worship in terms of identity of Brahma, who is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss. The Lord says—

बुद्ध्या विशुद्ध्या युक्तो धृत्यात्मानं नियम्य च ।
 शब्दादीन्विषयांस्त्यक्त्वा रागद्वेषौ व्युदस्य च ॥
 विविक्तसेवी लघ्वाशी यतवाककायमानसः ।
 ध्यानयोगपरो नित्यं वैराग्यं समुपाश्रितः ॥
 अहंकारं बलं दर्पं कामं क्रोधं परिग्रहम् ।
 विमुच्य निर्ममः शान्तो ब्रह्मभूयाय कल्पते ॥
 ब्रह्मभूतः प्रसन्नात्मा न शोचति न काङ्क्षति ।
 समः सर्वेषु भूतेषु मद्भक्तिं लभते पराम् ॥
 भक्त्या मामभिजानाति यावान्यश्चास्मि तत्त्वतः ।
 ततो मां तत्त्वतो ज्ञात्वा विशते तदनन्तरम् ॥

"Endowed with an untarnished intellect and taking a light, Sāttvika and regulated diet, living in a lonely and undefiled place, having rejected sound and other objects of

sense, having controlled the mind, speech and body by restraining the mind and senses through firmness of a Sāttvika type, taking a resolute stand on dispassion, having completely got rid of attraction and aversion and remaining ever devoted to the Yoga of meditation, having given up egotism, violence, arrogance, lust, anger and luxuries, devoid of the feeling of meum and tranquil of heart—such a man becomes qualified for oneness with Brahma, who is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss. Established in identity with Brahma (who is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss solidified) and cheerful in mind, the Sāṅkhyayogī no longer grieves nor craves for anything. The same to all beings, such a Yogi attains supreme devotion to Me. Through that supreme devotion he comes to know Me in reality, what and how great I am; and thereby knowing Me in essence, he forthwith enters into My being.”

From what has been submitted above in regard to worship in terms of diversity and that in terms of identity as taught by the Gītā it should have been clear to the reader that the two courses of discipline are intended for men of different spiritual levels (Gītā III.3). Both of them are good; and their ultimate goal is the same (Gītā V. 4-5 and 24), which baffles description. The same can never be precisely defined. Even he who has attained it cannot express it in words; for it is of the nature of realization. He who cherishes faith in and a liking for Devotion is qualified for worship in terms of diversity; while he who has faith in and a predilection for the path of knowledge is qualified for worship in terms of identity.

The form of worship in which the worshipper looks upon God as distinct from himself during the period of Sādhanā, but which aims at oneness with Him, is really worship in terms of identity (vide Gītā XIV. 26). A course

of discipline which proceeds on the lines of identity and also aims at identity undoubtedly falls under the category of Sāṅkhyayoga (vide Gītā IV. 33—35). On the other hand, the course of discipline which proceeds on the lines of diversity and also aims at diversity constitutes what goes by the name of worship in terms of diversity (vide Gītā XVIII. 65-66). At some places in the Gītā there is mention of worship in terms of diversity during the period of Sādhanā, while both diversity and identity have been declared as the ultimate goal. For instance, in verse 54 of Discourse XI perception and realization of God as well as the attainment of oneness with Him have been held out as a reward of exclusive Devotion. Thus, on close observation it will be found that the subject of worship has been dealt with in all its aspects in the Gītā. At one place there is mention of Bhakti predominated by Jñāna (XIII.10) and at another place of Jñāna predominated by Bhakti (VI.12); at a third place there is reference to absolute Devotion (XII. 6-7) and elsewhere to unmixed Jñāna (VI. 27—29).

Therefore, the best form of worship for a Sādhaka is precisely that in which he is able to put his faith. And it is that very form which he should pursue with diligence. Whatever the course of discipline one follows, repetition of the Divine Name and meditation on His Being must form an essential part of it and it should be carried on with reverence and in a disinterested spirit without interruption. In this way God can be realized speedily and with ease.



Bhakti in the Gītā

यं ब्रह्मावरुणेन्द्रुद्रमरुतः स्तुन्वन्ति दिव्यैः स्तवै-
र्वेदैः साङ्गपदक्रमोपनिषदैर्गायन्ति यं सामगाः ।
ध्यानावस्थिततदगतेन मनसा पश्यन्ति यं योगिनो
यस्यान्तं न विदुः सुरासुरगणा देवाय तस्मै नमः ॥

(Śrīmad Bhāgavata XII. xiii. 1)

“We bow to that Supreme Person, Nārāyaṇa, who is extolled even by great gods like Brahmā, Varuṇa (the god of water), Indra (the lord of paradise), Rudra (the god of destruction) and the Maruts (the wind-gods) through celestial hymns; whose glories are sung by those proficient in chanting the Sāmaveda through the Vedas along with the six Āṅgas (branches of knowledge auxiliary to the Vedas), Pada (division of the Vedic text into separate words), Krama (particular forms of reciting the Vedas) and the Upaniṣads; who is perceived by the Yogīs by means of their mind made steady through meditation and fixed on the Lord; and whose reality is not known even to gods and Asuras.”

Only those who offer exclusive and pure devotion to the Lord can speak on Devotion (Bhakti). An ordinary man that I am, I am making an attempt to deal with the subject, according to my own understanding, at your request. You will, however, excuse me for my mistakes.

The subject of today’s discourse is Devotion (Bhakti) in the Gītā. It is held by some persons that the first six chapters of the Gītā deal with Action (Karma), the next six—from the seventh to the twelfth, deal with Devotion (Bhakti) and the last six chapters from the thirteenth to the

eighteenth have Knowledge (Jñāna) for their subject. To a certain extent they are right; but on a closer examination it will appear that in the first six chapters the topic of Action (Karma) receives relatively greater attention, but not that it finds no place in other chapters. Similarly in the middle portion, comprising chapters VII to XII, the subject of Devotion (Bhakti) figures more prominently, but this does not mean that it does not recur in other places in the Gītā.

The first chapter is merely introductory. And the topic of Devotion (Bhakti) occurs more or less in chapters from the second to the eighteenth. In the same manner, in the last six chapters—from the thirteenth to the eighteenth—the treatment of Knowledge (Jñāna) is predominant, but not to its exclusion from other chapters. It cannot, therefore, be said that the three division of six chapters each deal exclusively with Action (Karma), Devotion (Bhakti) and Knowledge (Jñāna) respectively. In the first six chapters also Knowledge and Devotion are dealt with; and the chapters from the seventh to the twelfth have touched upon Action and Knowledge. And similarly in chapters from the thirteenth to the eighteenth Action and Devotion are also dealt with. In the eighteenth chapter, however, all subjects have been brought together. It begins with a question asked by Arjuna in the first verse. Then from the second to the twelfth verse only the Yoga of action (Karmayoga) is dealt with. From the thirteenth to the fortieth verse Sāṅkhya or Knowledge is the subject matter. Of the following verses—forty-first to forty-eighth—the Yoga of action is the subject and it is tinged with Devotion also, as the Lord has described here the duties of the four castes and then the four stages and elaborated in the forty-sixth verse the Yoga of action charged with Devotion. Then from the forty-ninth to the fifty-fifth verse Knowledge (Jñāna) along with worship is

treated. And this is the supreme consummation of the Yoga of Knowledge. But Knowledge as treated before in verses thirteenth to fortieth is without worship. There we find described the actions of a man of wisdom. But here along with Knowledge the importance of Devotion is also emphasised. Thus it will be clear that after dealing with the four topics—pure action, action tinged with Devotion, (pure) Knowledge and Knowledge mixed with Devotion, the Lord has elaborated in the end the Yoga of action predominantly charged with Devotion in the verses fifty-sixth to sixty-sixth. Devotion is clearly emphasised here as the final and special teaching for Arjuna, and he has to lay it to his heart. And it is therefore that the Lord after teaching him the fundamental principles exhorts him thus—

मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु।
 मामेवैष्वसि सत्यं ते प्रतिजाने प्रियोऽसि मे॥
 सर्वधर्मान्यरित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज।
 अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः॥

(XVIII. 65-66)

“Give your mind to Me, be devoted to Me, worship Me and bow to Me. Doing so you will come to Me alone, I sincerely assure you; for you are exceptionally dear to Me.”

“Resigning all your duties to Me, the all-powerful and all-supporting Lord, take refuge in Me alone. I shall absolve you of all sins, worry not.”

Then follow to the end verses in praise of the greatness of the *Gītā* (as a scripture). In the very last verse, that is the seventy-eighth, Sañjaya speaks to Dhṛtarāṣṭra words which may awaken good sense in his heart so that he may think it best to stop fighting.

Thus we find that in the entire *Gītā* there is an excellent exposition of all the three—Action, Devotion and Knowledge.

According to predominance of the topics dealt with, the first six chapters may be called Karmayoga; the next six, Bhaktiyoga and the last six, Jñānayoga.

It is now proposed to quote some illustrative verses to show where Devotion has been treated in the different chapters.

In chapter II verse 61 the Lord referred to Devotion thus—

तनि सर्वाणि संयम्य युक्त आसीत मत्परः ।
वशे हि यस्येन्द्रियाणि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥

“Therefore, having controlled them all and collecting one’s mind, one should sit for meditation, devoting oneself heart and soul to Me. For he whose senses are mastered is known to have a stable mind.”

The Lord has referred to Devotion here while describing a ‘स्थितप्रज्ञ’ or God-realized person of stable mind.

In the third chapter also we read the following verse—

मयि सर्वाणि कर्माणि संन्यस्याध्यात्मचेतसा ।
निराशीर्निर्ममो भूत्वा युध्यस्व विगतज्वरः ॥

(III.30)

“Therefore, dedicating all actions to Me with your mind fixed on Me, the Self of all, nay, freed from hope and the feeling of meum and rid of mental fever, fight.”

Here the Lord’s exhortation is to dedicate all actions to Him with the mind fixed on Him. The sentiment of Devotion is, therefore, clearly adumbrated here.

Similarly in the fourth chapter there is the following verse—

ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम् ।
मम वत्मनुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः ॥

(IV. 11)

“Arjuna, howsoever men seek Me, even so do I approach them; for all men follow My path in everyway.”

Before this the Lord has referred to His Avatāra, that is, His descent upon the earth, and has mentioned the good fortune of him who knows the truth about the Lord’s birth and His activities. Here is the verse—

जन्म कर्म च मे दिव्यमेवं यो वेत्ति तत्त्वतः ।
त्यक्त्वा देहं पुनर्जन्म नैति मामेति सोऽर्जुन ॥

(IV.9)

“Arjuna, My birth and activities are divine. He who knows this in reality is not reborn on leaving his body, but comes to Me.”

Among other verses on Devotion in this chapter this is also one.

At the end of the fifth chapter occurs the following verse—

भोक्तारं यज्ञतपसां सर्वलोकमहेश्वरम् ।
सुहृदं सर्वभूतानां ज्ञात्वा मां शान्तिमृच्छति ॥

(V. 29)

“Having known Me in reality as the enjoyer of all sacrifices and austerities, the supreme Lord of all the worlds and the disinterested friend of all beings, My devotee attains peace.”

Now the question arises whether peace is attained by knowing the Lord as the enjoyer of sacrifices and austerities, or by knowing Him as the Lord of all the worlds, or again as the friend of all beings. Or all the three aspects must be known. It is needless to say that peace is attained by knowing all the three simultaneously, but surely it is attainable also by knowing even one of them. When we realize that the Lord is really the enjoyer of all sacrifices, then pouring oblations into the sacred fire, feeding the poor or serving any being will mean that the Lord Himself in the form of

fire is accepting our offering, that He is receiving food in the form of a guest or a cow and that He, and none other, is gratified with our service. Thus we shall realize His omnipresence and this will lead to peace and ultimate liberation. Similarly if it is fully realized that He is the Lord of all the worlds, the Supreme Person above all, such realization will result in liberation.

यो मामेवमसमूढो जानाति पुरुषोत्तमम् ।
स सर्वविद्वज्ञति मां सर्वभावेन भारत ॥

(XV. 19)

“Arjuna, the wise man who thus realizes Me as the Supreme Person knows all, and constantly worships Me (the all-pervading Lord) with his whole being.”

Then it is also said that the Lord is the friend of all beings. One who realizes this fact becomes friendly to all himself and the other qualities of a devotee (as described in chapter XII, verses 13 to 19) begin to develop in him. He who believes the Lord to be the friend of all and follows Him should himself become like Him. Describing such a devotee the Lord has said—

अद्वेष्टा सर्वभूतानां मैत्रः करुण एव च ।
निर्ममो निरहंकारः समदुःखसुखः क्षमी ॥
संतुष्टः सततं योगी यतात्मा दृढनिश्चयः ।
मध्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्यो मद्भक्तः स मे प्रियः ॥

(XII. 13-14)

“He who is free from malice towards all beings, friendly and compassionate, rid of ‘I’ and ‘mine’, balanced in joy and sorrow, forgiving by nature, ever-contented and mentally united with Me, nay, who has subdued his mind, senses and body, has a firm resolve, and has surrendered his mind and reason to Me—that devotee of Mine is dear to Me.”

The fifth chapter has also some more verses on Devotion—

ब्रह्मण्याधाय कर्मणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा करोति यः ।
लिप्यते न स पापेन पद्मपत्रमिवाम्भसा ॥

(V.10)

“He who acts offering all actions to God, and shaking off attachment, remains untouched by sin, as the lotus leaf by water.”

Then occurs the following verse in the sixth chapter—

योगिनामपि सर्वेषां मद्भूतेनान्तरात्मना ।
श्रद्धावान्भजते यो मां स मे युक्ततमो मतः ॥

(VI.47)

“Of all Yogīs, again, he who devoutly worships Me with his mind fixed on Me is considered by Me to be the best Yogī.”

This is the principal verse on Devotion. There are other verses too on the same subject as the following—

यो मां पश्यति सर्वत्र सर्वं च मयि पश्यति ।
तस्याहं न प्रणश्यामि स च मे न प्रणश्यति ॥

(VI. 20)

“He who sees Me (the Universal Spirit) present in all beings, and all beings existing within Me, never loses sight of Me, and I never lose sight of him.”

The Lord says in the seventh chapter—

दैवी ह्येषा गुणमयी मम माया दुरत्यया ।
मामेव ये प्रपद्यन्ते मायामेतां तरन्ति ते ॥

(VII.14)

“For, this most wonderful Māyā (veil) of Mine, consisting of the three Guṇas (modes of Prakṛti), is extremely difficult to break through; those, however, who constantly adore Me alone are able to cross it.”

And further—

चतुर्विधा भजन्ते मां जनाः सुकृतिनोऽर्जुन ।
 आर्तो जिज्ञासुरथर्थी ज्ञानी च भरतर्षभ ॥
 तेषां ज्ञानी नित्ययुक्त एकभक्तिर्विशिष्यते ।
 प्रियो हि ज्ञानिनोऽत्यर्थमहं स च मम प्रियः ॥

(VII.16-17)

“Four types of devotees of noble deeds worship Me, Arjuna—the seeker after worldly possessions, the man in affliction, the seeker of knowledge, and the man of wisdom, O chief of the Bharatas. Of these the best is the man of wisdom, ever established in identity with Me and possessed of exclusive devotion. For I am extremely dear to the wise man (who knows Me in reality), and he is extremely dear to Me.”

There are other verses also bearing on the subject in the seventh chapter, because in the group of six chapters—from the seventh to the twelfth—Devotion is the principal subject treated. This is why this group is named after Devotion. One thing, however, must be noticed and borne in mind that in most of the verses the words used by the Lord with respect to Himself are indicative of His divine nature. All first person pronouns in their various forms used by the Lord are meant to establish His divinity, just as the forms of address used by Arjuna with reference to the Lord in chapters eleven and twelve are meant for the Lord as God. Most of the verses of chapters seven to twelve will bear out this point. Very few verses will be found which do not refer to the Lord’s divinity. This is the reason for marking this group of six chapters as dealing principally with Devotion and in no other chapters do we find this subject so elaborately treated. In most of the verses in this group the Lord’s words are exhortations and they point to His divine nature. Their meaning is clear and free from ambiguity.

There are many verses bearing on Devotion in the eighth chapter. For example—

अन्तकाले च मामेव स्मरन्मुक्त्वा कलेवरम् ।
यः प्रयाति स मद्दावं याति नास्त्यत्र संशयः ॥

(VIII. 5)

“He who departs from the body, thinking of Me alone even at the time of death, attains My state; there is no doubt about it.”

The Lord has also said—

तस्मात्सर्वेषु कालेषु मामनुस्मर युध्य च ।
मर्यपितमनोबुद्धिर्मामेवैष्यस्यसंशयम् ॥

(VIII. 7)

“Therefore, Arjuna, think of Me at all times and fight. With mind and reason thus set on Me, you will doubtless come to Me.”

And then we have—

अनन्यचेताः सततं यो मां स्मरति नित्यशः ।
तस्याहं सुलभः पार्थ नित्ययुक्तस्य योगिनः ॥

(VIII. 14)

“To that Yogi, O Arjuna, who always and constantly thinks of Me with undivided mind and is ever absorbed in Me, I am easily attainable.”

There are other verses also bearing on the topic in this chapter; but for the sake of brevity they are not quoted here. It is, however, clear that Devotion has been elaborately dealt with in that chapter.

The ninth chapter, however, is fully charged with Devotion. Many verses bearing on Devotion have been uttered in this chapter by the Lord. Just a few may be quoted here—

अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते ।
तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ॥

(IX.22)

“To those devotees, however, who, loving no one else, constantly think of Me, and worship Me in a disinterested spirit, nay, who are ever united in thought with Me, I bring full security and personally attend to their needs.”

Here ‘Yoga’ means acquisition of something one does not possess, and ‘Kṣema’ means preservation of one’s possessions.

पत्रं पुष्पं फलं तोयं यो मे भक्त्या प्रयच्छति ।

तदहं भक्त्युपहृतमशनामि प्रयतात्मनः ॥

(IX. 26)

“I appear before that disinterested devotee of sinless mind, who offers to Me with love a leaf, a flower, a fruit or even water, and delightfully partake of that article offered by him with love.”

The chapter ends with this exhortation—

मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु ।

मामेवैष्यसि युक्त्वैवमात्मानं मत्परायणः ॥

(IX. 34)

“Fix your mind on Me, be devoted to Me, worship Me and make obeisance to Me; thus linking yourself with Me and entirely depending on Me, you shall come to Me.”

The tenth chapter describes the Lord’s supreme glories and His supernatural Yogic power. The purpose is to instil Devotion in our hearts. There are many verses bearing on Devotion in this chapter as well. Only two are chosen here for reference—

मच्चित्ता मद्गतप्राणा बोधयन्तः परस्परम् ।

कथयन्तश्च मां नित्यं तुष्यन्ति च रमन्ति च ॥

तेषां सततयुक्तानां भजतां प्रीतिपूर्वकम् ।

ददामि बुद्धियोगं तं येन मामुपयान्ति ते ॥

(X. 9-10)

“With their mind fixed on Me, and their lives surrendered

to Me, enlightening one another about My greatness and speaking of Me, My devotees ever remain contented and take delight in Me. On those ever united through meditation with Me and worshipping Me with love, I confer that Yoga of wisdom through which they come to Me."

In the following (eleventh) chapter the Lord reveals His divine universal form and Arjuna extols His glory and offers prayer to Him which are charged with Devotion. The Lord also indicates ways for developing Devotion. Only two verses of practical value are quoted here and they occur at the end of the chapter—

भक्त्या त्वनन्यया शक्य अहमेवंविधोऽर्जुन ।
 ज्ञातुं द्रष्टुं च तत्त्वेन प्रवेष्टुं च परंतप ॥
 मत्कर्मकृन्मत्परमो मद्वक्तः सङ्गवर्जितः ।
 निर्वैरः सर्वभूतेषु यः स मामेति पाण्डव ॥

(XI. 54-55)

"Through undivided Devotion, however, I can be seen in this form (with four-arms), nay, known in essence and even entered into, O valiant Arjuna. He who performs all his duties for My sake, depends on Me, is devoted to Me, has no attachment, and is free from malice towards all beings, reaches Me, O Arjuna."

The twelfth chapter does not merely refer to Devotion but comprehends it. Here the Lord has praised the supreme excellence of His devotee. When Arjuna asked Him which of the two devotees is better, one who adores the formless Brahma and the other who worships God with attributes, the Lord clearly declared—

मत्यावेश्य मनो ये मां नित्ययुक्ता उपासते ।
 श्रद्धया परयोपेतास्ते मे युक्ततमा मताः ॥

(XII.2)

"I consider them to be the best Yogīs, who endowed

with supreme faith, and ever united through meditation with Me, worship Me with the mind centred on Me.”

That is why the Lord exhorted Arjuna saying—

मध्येव मन आधत्स्व मयि बुद्धिं निवेशय ।
निवसिष्यसि मध्येव अत ऊर्ध्वं न संशयः ॥

(XII.8)

“Therefore, fix your mind on Me and establish your intellect in Me alone; after that you will abide solely in Me. There is no doubt about it.”

There are many similar verses bearing on Devotion in this chapter; but the purpose is to indicate briefly that the topic of Devotion is found dealt with in the entire Gītā and more specially in the chapters from the seventh to the twelfth.

The thirteenth chapter also is not without reference to devotion—

मयि चानन्ययोगेन भक्तिरव्यभिचारिणी ।
विविक्तदेशसेवित्वमरतिर्जनसंसदि ॥

(XIII. 10)

“Unflinching devotion to Me through exclusive attachment, living in a secluded and holy place, and finding no enjoyment in the company of men are declared as the aids to the attainment of knowledge (spiritual wisdom).”

In the fourteenth chapter occurs the verse—

मां च योऽव्यभिचारेण भक्तियोगेन सेवते ।
स गुणान्समतीत्यैतान्ब्रह्मभूयाय कल्पते ॥

(XIV. 26)

“He too who constantly worships Me through the Yoga of exclusive devotion transcends these three Guṇas, and becomes qualified for attaining Brahma.”

Similarly in the fifteenth chapter we have the following verse—

ततः पदं तत् परिमार्गितव्यं
 यस्मिन् गता न निवर्तन्ति भूयः ।
 तमेव चाद्यं पुरुषं प्रपद्ये
 यतः प्रवृत्तिः प्रसृता पुराणी ॥

(XV. 4)

“After that a man should diligently seek for that supreme state, viz., God, having attained to which they return no more to this world; and having fully resolved that he stands dedicated to that primeval Being (God Nārāyaṇa) Himself from whom the flow of this beginningless creation has progressed, he should dwell and meditate on Him.”

After preaching renunciation in the third verse, surrender has been taught as the means of seeking Him—

यो मामेवमसमूढो जानाति पुरुषोत्तमम् ।
 स सर्वविद्वज्ञति मां सर्वभावेन भारत ॥

(XV. 19)

“The wise man, O Arjuna, who thus realizes Me as the Supreme Person knows everything, and constantly worships Me (the all-pervading Lord) with his whole being.”

The sixteenth chapter begins with the enumeration of the divine virtues and its first verse—

अभयं सत्त्वसंशुद्धिर्ज्ञनयोगव्यवस्थितिः ।
 दानं दमश्च यज्ञश्च स्वाध्यायस्तप आर्जवम् ॥

(XVI. 1)

“Absolute fearlessness, perfect purity of mind, constant fixity in the Yoga of meditation for the sake of Self-realization, and even so charity in the Sāttvika form, control of the senses, worship of God and other deities as well as of one’s elders including the performance of Agnihotra (pouring oblations into the sacred fire) and other sacred duties, study and teaching of the Vedas and other sacred books as well as the chanting of God’s names and praises,

suffering hardships for the discharge of one's sacred obligations and straightness of mind as well as of the body and senses;" contains the compound word 'ज्ञानयोगव्यवस्थितिः', which means the Yoga of meditation. The idea is to meditate with fixed attention on the form of the Lord according to our knowledge of that form. And this too is devotion itself.

Only one illustrative verse from the seventeenth chapter is referred to here—

ॐ तत्सदिति निर्देशो ब्रह्मणस्त्रिविधः स्मृतः ।
ब्राह्मणास्तेन वेदाश्च यज्ञाश्च विहिताः पुरा ॥

(XVII. 23)

"Om, Tat and Sat—this has been declared as the threefold appellation of the Absolute, who is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss solidified. By that were the Brāhmaṇas and the Vedas as well as sacrifices created at the cosmic dawn."

There are many verses bearing on Devotion in the eighteenth chapter. A selected few are given below—

यतः प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।
स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः ॥

(XVIII. 46)

"Man attains the highest perfection by worshipping through his own natural duties Him from whom the tide of creation has streamed forth and by whom all this universe is pervaded."

Then there are two following verses concluding the argument—

मन्मना भव मद्दक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु ।
मामेवैष्वसि सत्यं ते प्रतिजाने प्रियोऽसि मे ॥
सर्वधर्मान्यरित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज ।
अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥

(XVIII. 65-66)

"Give your mind to Me, be devoted to Me, worship Me

and bow to Me. Doing so you will come to Me alone, I sincerely assure you; for you are exceptionally dear to Me. Resigning all your duties to Me, the all-powerful and all-supporting Lord, take refuge in Me alone. I shall absolve you of all sins, worry not."

Thus it can be said that the topic of Devotion is to be found discussed in all the chapters of the *Gītā* from the second to the eighteenth. Like Action and Knowledge, Devotion is also comprehensively treated in the entire *Gītā*.



Satsaṅga and the Characteristics, Greatness and Glory of Devotees with Examples

Love for and communion with 'Sat' (the only real substance, viz., God) is the real and primary meaning of 'Satsaṅga'. 'Satsaṅga' in its secondary sense comprises the fellowship of devotees who have realized God, or of enlightened and exalted souls who have attained Liberation in their very lifetime. 'Satsaṅga' in its tertiary sense denotes the company of strivers of an advanced type who have developed love for God. 'Satsaṅga' of a fourth order includes the study of true scriptures.

Love for and communion with God, who is the only real substance, is the reward of all spiritual endeavours. The fellowship of 'devotees' who have realized God or who have developed exclusive love for God is secured by grace of God alone. He alone is qualified for Divine Grace, who believes himself to be a recipient of such grace. And realizing the true nature of that grace, he attains peace of mind (Gītā V. 29). He too is qualified for Divine Grace, who is full of reverence, faith and love for God and His devotees and in whose mind lie stored latencies of reverence and Devotion.

The great devotee Vibhīṣaṇa says to Hanumān in the 'Rāmacaritamānasa' as follows—

“But I am now confident, Hanumān, that Śrī Rāma

will shower His grace on me; for one never meets saints (like you) without the grace of Śrī Hari.”*

Lord Śiva also says to Pārvatī—

“There is no boon equal to a meeting with saints. That, however, is not possible without the grace of Śrī Hari; so declare the Vedas as well as the Purāṇas.”†

The fellowship of saints is also had by virtue of noble tendencies acquired in past lives. Lord Śrī Rāma Himself says in the course of His sermon to subjects—

“Devotion is independent and a mine of all blessings; men, however, cannot attain it except through the fellowship of saints. Saints for their part are inaccessible without a stock of merit; the fellowship of the Lord’s devotees in any case brings to an end the cycle of births and deaths.”‡

Now we proceed to describe the characteristics of those who have realized God and whom the Lord Himself speaks of as His beloved devotees in the Gītā—

“He who is free from malice towards all beings, friendly and compassionate, rid of the notion of ‘I’ and ‘mine’, balanced in joy and sorrow, forgiving by nature, ever contented and mentally united with Me, nay, who has subdued his mind, senses and body, has a firm resolve, and has surrendered his mind and reason to Me—that devotee of Mine is dear to Me.”§

* अब मोहि भा भरोस हनुमंता ।
बिनु हरि कृपा मिलहिं नहिं संता ॥

† गिरिजा संत समागम सम न लाभ कछु आन ।
बिनु हरि कृपा न होइ सो गावहिं बेद पुरान ॥

‡ भक्ति सुतंत्र सकल सुख खानी ।
बिनु सतसंग न पावहिं प्रानी ॥

पुन्य पुंज बिनु मिलहिं न संता ।
सतसंगति संसृति कर अंता ॥

§ अद्वेष्टा सर्वभूतानां मैत्रः करुण एव च ।
निर्ममो निरहंकारः समदुःखसुखः क्षमी ॥

Devotees who have realized God or enlightened souls who have risen above the three Guṇas (modes of Prakṛti) and have attained Liberation in their very lifetime are even-minded towards all living beings and objects (Gītā XIV. 24—35). They do not have selfish dependence of any kind on any creature whatsoever (Gītā III. 18). They are entirely free from identification with the body and have no sense of ownership or attachment with respect to their dwelling etc. (Gītā XII. 19). And they are full of compassion and love towards all living beings and look upon all with the same eye (Gītā XII. 13). Describing the undifferentiating attitude of such God-realized souls, the Lord says—

“The wise look with the same eye on a Brāhmaṇa endowed with learning and culture, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a pariah too.”*

By speaking in this verse of an enlightened soul as equally disposed towards all, the Lord expresses the idea that though dealing differently with all according to the rules of propriety as enjoined by the scriptures, a wise man is even-minded towards all. As a matter of fact, it is not possible for anyone to behave equally with all; for sacred rites like nuptials and Śrāddha etc., are caused to be performed by Brāhmaṇas alone and not by a pariah. Only cow’s milk is used for human consumption and not that of a bitch. We ride on the elephant alone and not on the cow. Only elephants and cows are fed with leaves and grass, not dogs or men. Therefore, treating all with honour and respect

संतुष्टः सततं योगी यतात्मा दृढनिश्चयः ।

मर्यपितमनोबुद्धिर्यो मद्भक्तः स मे प्रियः ॥

(Gītā XII. 13-14)

* विद्याविनयसम्पन्ने ब्राह्मणे गवि हस्तिनि ।

शुनि चैव शवपाके च पण्डिताः समदर्शिनः ॥

(Gītā V.18)

according to their deserts and with an eye to the good of all is what constitutes a balanced behaviour towards all, and not serving all indiscriminately with the same material. But, while maintaining due distinction in behaviour, towards different persons, one should bear the same love and affinity towards all even as one loves one's limbs in a uniform degree. Even though one's love for and identification with all the parts of one's body is uniform, one uses the various limbs differently. As for example, we view our head with the same reverence as we regard a Brāhmaṇa; we regard our arms with the same esteem as we look upon a Kṣatriya; we treat our thighs with the same regard as we bestow upon a Vaiśya; we accord the same position to our feet as to a Śūdra and treat our anus and pudenda as untouchables. We should likewise deal with all in an appropriate manner while viewing them as our own selves. The Lord says—

“Arjuna, he who regards all with an undifferentiating eye on the analogy of his own self, and views the joys and sorrows of all with a similar eye—such a Yogi is deemed the highest of all.” *

While describing the characteristics of saints, Lord Śrī Rāma says to Bharata in the Rāmacaritamānasa—

“Saints as a rule have no hankering for the pleasures of sense and are the very mines of amiability and other virtues. They are grieved to see others in distress and rejoice at the sight of others' joy. They are even-minded and look upon none as their enemy. Free from vanity and passion, they are conquerors of greed, anger, joy and fear. Tender of heart and compassionate to the distressed, they cherish guileless devotion to Me in thought, word and deed; and giving

* आत्मौपम्येन सर्वत्र समं पश्यति योऽर्जुन।

सुखं वा यदि वा दुःखं स योगी परमो मतः ॥

(Gītā VI.32)

honour to all, they are free from pride themselves. Such souls, Bharata, are dear to Me as life. Having no interested motives, they are devoted to My Name and are abodes of tranquillity, dispassion, humility and good humour. Again, know him for all time, dear brother, a genuine saint, whose heart is a home of all such noble qualities as placidity, guilelessness, friendliness and devotion to the feet of the Brāhmaṇas, which is the fountain of all virtues. They never desist from the control of their mind and senses, religious observances and correct behaviour and never utter a harsh word.”

“They who regard both—obloquy and praise alike and who claim My lotus-feet as their only possession—such saintly souls are dear to Me as life and are veritable abodes of noble qualities and embodiments of bliss.”*

Many of these characteristics are subjective and hence capable of being perceived by one’s own self. Hence they

* विषय अलंपट सील गुनाकर ।
 पर दुख दुख सुख सुख देखे पर ॥
 सम अभूत रिपु बिमद बिरागी ।
 लोभामरण हरष भय त्यागी ॥
 कोमल चित दीनह पर दाया ।
 मन बच क्रम मम भगति अमाया ॥
 सबहि मानप्रद आपु अमानी ।
 भरत प्रान सम मम ते प्रानी ॥
 बिगत काम मम नाम परायन ।
 सांति बिरति बिनती मुदितायन ॥
 सीतलता सरलता मयत्री ।
 द्विज पद प्रीति धर्म जनयत्री ॥
 ए सब लच्छन बसहिं जासु उर ।
 जानेहु तात संत संतत फुर ॥
 सम दम नियम नीति नहिं डोलहिं ।
 परुष बचन कबहुँ नहिं बोलहिं ॥
 निंदा अस्तुति उभय सम ममता मम पद कंज ।
 ते सज्जन मम प्रानप्रिय गुन मंदिर सुख पुंज ॥

are known to the devotees themselves; while many of them form part of their external conduct, by observing which others too can gauge their mental state to some extent. In reality, however, they can be known by those alone who enjoy the grace of God and exalted souls. For us, as a matter of fact, God-realized saints are they whose touch, sight, speech and conversation bring out in us the characteristics of God-realized souls. Realizing this, we should make much of those saintly persons. He alone can derive special benefit from noble souls who cultivates their fellowship with reverence and devotion and carries out their orders. The Lord says in the *Gītā*—

“Not knowing thus, other dull-witted persons, however, worship (just) as they have heard from others; and even those who are thus devoted to hearing are able to cross the ocean of mundane existence in the shape of death.”*

Describing the glory and efficacy of the company of such saints, *Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa* says—

“Of the various creatures, both animate and inanimate, living in this world, whether in water or on land or in the air, whoever has ever attained wisdom, glory, salvation, material prosperity or welfare anywhere and by any means whatsoever, know it to be the result of association with holy men; there is no other means either in the world or in the *Vedas*. Wisdom does not dawn without association with saints and such association cannot be easily had without the grace of *Śrī Rāma*. Contact with noble souls is the root of joy and blessing; it constitutes the very fruit and fulfilment of all endeavours, whereas all other practices are blossoms as it were. Through contact with the virtuous even the

* अन्ये त्वेवमजानन्तः श्रुत्वान्येभ्य उपासते ।
तेऽपि चातितरन्त्येव मृत्युं श्रुतिपरायणाः ॥

wicked get reformed, just as a base metal is transmuted by the touch of the philosopher's stone.”*

In this very connection Lord Mahādeva says to Garuḍa—

“Except in the company of saints there is no talk of Śrī Hari, and one cannot be rid of error except through such talk. And till one's error is dispersed one cannot have deep-rooted affection for Śrī Rāma's feet.”†

Śrī Kākabhuṣuṇḍi too says to Garuḍa—

“Devotion to Śrī Hari, which is so delightful, is the reward of all spiritual endeavours; none has ever secured it except through a saint. Realizing this, whoever cultivates the fellowship of saints finds Devotion to Śrī Rāma easy of attainment, O king of the birds.”‡

What, then, shall we say of those supremely qualified souls who have been sent down in our midst by God for the good of the world. One can be specially benefited by their very sight, speech, touch, thought and conversation. Just as

* जलचर थलचर नभचर नाना ।
जे जड़ चेतन जीव जहाना ॥
मति कीरति गति भूति भलाई ।
जब जेहिं जतन जहाँ जेहिं पाई ॥
सो जानब सतसंग प्रभाऊ ।
लोकहुँ बेद न आन उपाऊ ॥
बिनु सतसंग बिबेक न होई ।
राम कृपा बिनु सुलभ न सोई ॥
सतसंगत मुद मंगल मूला ।
सोइ फल सिधि सब साधन फूला ॥
सठ सुधरहिं सतसंगति पाई ।
पारस परस कुधात सुहाई ॥

† बिनु सतसंग न हरि कथा तेहि बिनु मोह न भाग ।
मोह गएँ बिनु राम पद होई न दृढ़ अनुराग ॥

‡ सब कर फल हरि भगति सुहाई ।

सो बिनु संत न काहुँ पाई ॥
अस बिचारि जोइ कर सतसंगा ।
राम भगति तेहि सुलभ बिहंगा ॥

the sight, speech, touch or thought of a belle excites passion in the heart of a lustful man, the sight, speech, touch or thought of a God-loving man must likewise awaken love of God in us. It is well-known that the very touch of a philosopher's stone turns a base metal into gold. The fellowship of an exalted soul has been declared to be even more efficacious than the touch of a philosopher's stone. A Hindi poet says—

“Know that there exists a world of difference between a saint and a philosopher's stone. While the latter converts iron into gold, the former casts one in his own mould.”*

The touch of a philosopher's stone invariably turns iron into gold. If it does not, it should be concluded that the stone is not a philosopher's stone or the piece of iron is not iron. Similarly, through the fellowship of exalted souls a striver surely turns out to be an exalted soul himself. If he does not, the irresistible conclusion is that either the exalted soul is not really so or that the striver lacks in faith, reverence and love.

Not only living men but objects too, which attract the notice, enter the mind or obtain the touch of devotees to whom authority has been delegated by God, get saturated with divine love. If they reach the presence of a seeker of enlightenment who is on the verge of death, they redeem him by narrating sacred stories or chanting the Divine Name before him. The ‘Nārada Purāṇa’ goes the length of asserting as follows—

“Looked at by exalted souls, even those who are guilty of major sins or are tainted with subordinate sins do reach the highest goal. If any such virtuous soul happens to behold a dead body, the smoke rising out of its pyre (while

* पारसमें अरु संतमें बहुत अंतरौ जान।
वह लोहा कंचन करै, वह करै आपु समान॥

it is being cremated) or even its ashy remains, the deceased attains the supreme goal.”*

It is for this very reason that the fellowship of exalted souls has been particularly glorified in our sacred books. Says the Bhāgavata—

“We cannot compare with a moment’s fellowship of loving devotees of the Lord either heavenly bliss or even final beatitude (the cessation of birth and death), much less the enjoyments sought after by mortals.”†

In the Rāmacaritamānasa too we come across a similar remark addressed by the demoness Laṅkinī to Hanumān—

“In one scale of the balance, dear son, put together the delights of heaven and the bliss of final beatitude; but they will all be outweighed by the joy derived from a moment’s communion with saints.”‡

Referring to the good-will of such exalted souls as the principal means of developing Devotion, the sage Nārada says—

“Such Devotion can, however, be developed primarily through the good-will of exalted souls (who have developed love for God), or by a little bit of Divine Grace.”§

Nārada says again—

“The fellowship of exalted souls can, however, be

* महापातकयुक्ता वा युक्ता वा चोपपातकैः ।
परं पदं प्रयान्त्येव महद्विरवलोकिताः ॥
कलेवरं वा तद्दस्म तद्दूमं वापि सत्तम् ।
यदि पश्यति पुण्यात्मा स प्रयाति परां गतिम् ॥

(Nārada Purāṇa, Pūrvārdha. VII. 74-75)

† तुलयाम लवेनापि न स्वर्गं नापुनर्भविम् ।
भगवत्सङ्गिसङ्गस्य मर्त्यानां किमुताशिषः ॥
(Bhāg. I. xviii. 13)

‡ तात स्वर्गं अपवर्गं सुखं धरिअ तुला एक अंग ।
तूल न ताहि सकल मिलि जो सुख लव सतसंग ॥

§ मुख्यतस्तु महत्कृपयैव भगवत्कृपालेशाद् वा
(Bhakti-Sūtras 38)

rarely had, and is inaccessible (too). It is (nevertheless) unfailing (in its effect when actually obtained).”*

“Such fellowship too can be had through His (God’s) grace (alone).”†

The Bhāgavata also says—

“A human body can be had with difficulty by embodied souls and is liable to perish any moment. Even in one’s human existence I regard the sight of those who love Lord Viṣṇu, as difficult to obtain.”‡

If we happen to come across such an exalted soul, we should greet him by prostrating before him, should learn the truth about God by putting questions to him with reverence and devotion, and should obey and render service to him. Real service to such exalted souls consists in obeying them. Even greater than this is to abide by their hints, act in conformity with their principles and follow their mind, to place in their hands the reins of our mind and senses and thus serve as puppets in their hands. Thanks to the fellowship of such blessed souls, not only are noble virtues and right conduct manifested in the life of a supremely devout soul striving on the lines indicated above, and evil propensities and immoral conduct disappear, but devotion to God, knowledge of His truth and even His realization etc., become easy of access.

Numerous examples of the potency of Satsaṅga are met with in the scriptures. We should take note of them. The

* महत्सङ्गस्तु दुर्लभोऽगम्योऽमोघश्च।

(Bhakti-Sūtras. 39)

† लभ्यतेऽपि तत्कृपयैव।

(Bhakti-Sūtras. 40)

‡ दुर्लभो मानुषो देहो देहिनां क्षणभङ्गरुः।
तत्रापि दुर्लभं मन्ये वैकुण्ठप्रियदर्शनम्॥

(Bhāg. XI. ii. 29)

foremost examples of Satsaṅga as understood in the sense of God-love and God-realization are found in Sutīkṣṇa and Śabari. Their story can be seen in the Aranyakāṇḍa of Tulasīdāsa's Rāmāyaṇa. Of course, there are numerous examples of attaining knowledge of the truth about God and His realization through the fellowship of enlightened souls who have attained Liberation in this very life or of devotees who have realized God. Thanks to the fellowship and precepts of Nārada, Dhruva was blessed with God-vision and also attained his desired end (vide Bhāgavata, Book IV, Discourses 8 & 9). [Through the contact of Kākabhuśuṇḍi Garuḍa was not only able to get rid of his infatuation but even developed exclusive love for the Lord (Rāmacaritamānasa, Uttarakāṇḍa). Śrīvāsa, Raghunātha Bhatta, Haridāsa and others were redeemed through the fellowship and admonition of Śrī Caitanya. Similarly by obedience to Gautama, son of Haridrumāna, Jābālā's son Satyakāma, was able to realize the truth about Brahma, and so also Upakosala by cultivating the fellowship of and ministering to Satyakāma (Chānd. Up. V. iv. to xvii).] The five Ṛsis, Prācīnaśāla, Satyayajña, Indradyumna, Jana and Budila, who sought the presence of king Aśvapati along with the high-souled Uddālaka, attained enlightenment through the contact and precepts of the said monarch (Ch. Up. V.v. to xi). Śvetaketu realized the truth about Brahma through the blessed company of Uddālaka, son of Aruṇa (Ch. Up. VI. viii to xvi). Nārada found the darkness of his ignorance dispelled and attained wisdom through the fellowship and teachings of Sanatkumāra (Ch. Up. VII). Maitreyī realized the truth about Brahma through the admonition of sage Yājñavalkya (Bṛh. Up. IV. v). Through the contact and teachings of Dharmarāja the boy Naciketā attained Brahmahood after realizing the truth about his own self (Kaṭh. Up. II.).

King Rahūgaṇa realized God through the fellowship and teachings of the high-souled Jaḍabharata (Bhāgavata V. xi to xiii). Thus the Vedas, epics and Purāṇas are replete with examples of developing love, for God, attaining knowledge about His truth and realizing Him through the company of blessed souls. What we should, therefore, do is to realize the value of Satsaṅga by a close study of our scriptures and accordingly derive benefit from the company of holy men. For, a man is moulded according to the company he keeps. It is also generally observed that living in the company of a Yogi, a person comes to be a Yogi; living in the company of a voluptuary one turns out to be a voluptuary; and living in the midst of the sick one is infected with sickness. Realizing this truth, we should abstain from the company of men attached to the world and seek the company of exalted souls alone. For, whereas the company of blessed souls is conducive to blessedness, association with worldly-minded men leads to bondage.

Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa says in his Rāmacaritamānasa—

“Communion with saints is the road to emancipation, while that of the libidinous paves the way for transmigration; so declare the saints themselves, the men of wisdom and the learned, as well as the Vedas, Purāṇas and other real scriptures.” *

In case, however, the company of exalted souls is not available, then in their absence one should seek the company of advanced strivers who are averse to the pleasures of sense and are endowed with divine virtues. One is greatly benefited even by cultivating their fellowship while following a course of spiritual discipline with reverence and devotion; for dispassion is aroused in us and the mind gets concentrated

* संत संग अपवर्ग कर कामी भव कर पंथ।
कहहिं संत कबि कोबिद श्रुति पुरान सदग्रंथ॥

through the very remembrance of those who are free from passions. In the “Yoga-Sūtras” of Patañjali we read—

वीतरागविषयं वा चित्तम्।

(I. 37)

“The mind, when concentrated on the personality of a man whose attachment (to the world) has altogether ceased, becomes steady.”

In the eyes of anchorites of a high order and exalted souls who are entirely free from passion, the wealth of all the three worlds taken together is trash. They regard honour, prestige and praise as a stigma. Therefore, they neither allow their feet to be worshipped nor offer to anyone the dust from their feet, nor the water in which their feet have been washed. They neither lend their photo for being worshipped nor receive addresses in their honour. They never seek renown; on the other hand, they tarry no longer at a place where they are glorified. Much less they would allow others to wave lights before them or offer leavings from their plate to others. If the company even of such noble persons, who are averse to the pleasures of sense and other worldly things, cannot be had, the least one should do is to eschew the company of wicked persons at all events. Describing the characteristics of wicked people, Śrī Tulasīdāsa says in his Rāmacaritamānasa—

“Now hear the characteristics of the impious, association with whom should be scrupulously avoided; for their company ever brings woe, even as a wicked cow ruins by her company a cow of noble breed. The heart of the wicked suffers terrible agony; for they ever burn at the sight of others' prosperity. Wherever they hear others reviled, they feel delighted as though they had stumbled upon a treasure lying on the road. Devoted to sensuality, anger, arrogance and greed, they are merciless, deceitful, crooked and impure. They bear enmity towards all without rhyme or reason; nay,

they behave inimically even with those who are actively kind to them.”*

* * *

“Malevolent by nature, they love others' wives and others' wealth and take delight in slandering others. Such vile and sinful men are demons in human garb.”†

* * *

“They recognize neither mother nor father nor preceptor nor the Brāhmaṇas; utterly ruined themselves, they bring ruin upon others. Overcome by infatuation they bear malice to others and have no love for communion with saints nor for the stories relating to Śrī Hari. Oceans of vice, dull-witted and lascivious, they revile the Vedas and usurp others' wealth. Bearing malice to the Brāhmaṇas, they are enemies of God in particular; and full of hypocrisy and deceit at heart, they outwardly wear a saintly appearance.”

“Such vile and wicked men are absent in the Satya and Tretā Yugas; a sprinkling of them will appear in Dvāpara, while multitudes of them will crop forth in the Kali age.”

* सुनहु असंतन्ह केर सुभाऊ । भूलेहुँ संगति करिअ न काऊ ॥
 तिन्ह कर संग सदा दुखदाई । जिमि कपिलहि घालइ हरहाई ॥
 खलन्ह हृदयँ अति ताप बिसेषी । जरहिं सदा पर संपति देखी ॥
 जहुँ कहुँ निंदा सुनहिं पराई । हरषहिं मनहुँ परी निधि पाई ॥
 काम क्रोध मद लोभ परायन । निर्दय कपटी कुटिल मलायन ॥
 बयरु अकारन सब काहू सों । जो कर हित अनहित ताहू सों ॥

x x x x

† पर द्रोही पर दार रत पर धन पर अपबाद ।
 ते नर पाँवर पापमय देह धरें मनुजाद ॥

x x x x

मातु पिता गुर बिप्र न मानहिं । आपु गए अरु घालहिं आनहिं ॥
 करहिं मोह बस द्रोह परावा । संत संग हरि कथा न भावा ॥
 अवगुन सिंधु मंदमति कामी । बेद बिदूषक परधन स्वामी ॥
 बिप्र द्रोह पर द्रोह बिसेषा । दंभ कपट जियैं धरें सुबेषा ॥
 ऐसे अधम मनुज खल कृतजुग त्रेताँ नाहिं ।
 द्वापर कछुक बृंद बहु होइहिं कलिजुग माहिं ॥

Drawing a pen-picture of the Kali age, the adorable Tulasīdāsa further says—

“Every virtue stood engulfed by the sins of Kali; all good books disappeared; impostors promulgated a number of creeds which they had invented out of their own wit.”*

* * *

“The right course for every individual is that which one takes a fancy to; a man of erudition is he who plays the braggart. Whoever launches spurious undertakings and is given over to hypocrisy, him does every one call a saint. He alone is clever, who robs another of his wealth; he who puts up false appearances is an ardent follower of established usage.”

“He alone who is a reprobate and has abandoned the path of the Vedas is a man of wisdom and dispassion in the Kali age. He alone who has grown big nails and long locks of matted hair is a renowned ascetic in the Kali age.”

“They alone who put on an unsightly garb and ornaments, eat anything and everything, no matter whether it is worth

* कलिमल ग्रसे धर्म सब लुप्त भए सदग्रंथ।
दंभिन्ह निज मति कलिप करि प्रगट किए बहु पंथ॥

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मारग सोइ जा कहुँ जोइ भावा । पंडित सोइ जो गाल बजावा॥
मिथ्यारंभ दंभ रत जोई । ता कहुँ संत कहइ सब कोई॥
सोइ सयान जो परधन हारी । जो कर दंभ सो बड़ आचारी॥

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निराचार जो श्रुति पथ त्यागी । कलिजुग सोइ ग्यानी सो बिरागी॥
जाकें नख अरु जटा बिसाला । सोइ तापस प्रसिद्ध कलिकाला॥
असुभ बेष भूषन धरें भच्छाभच्छ जे खाहिं ।
तेइ जोगी तेइ सिद्ध नर पूज्य ते कलिजुग माहिं॥

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सूद्र द्विजन्ह उपदेसहिं ग्याना । मेलि जनेऊ लेहिं कुदाना॥

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गुर सिष बधिर अंध का लेखा । एक न सुनइ एक नहिं देखा॥
हरइ सिष्य धन सोक न हरई । सो गुर घोर नरक महुँ परई॥

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eating or not, are ascetics; they alone are perfect men and they are worth adoring in the Kali age."

"Śūdras instruct the twice-born in spiritual wisdom and, wearing the sacred thread, accept the worst type of gifts."

"The disciple and the preceptor severally resemble a deaf man and a blind man; the one would not listen, while the other cannot see. A spiritual guide, who robs his disciple of money but fails to rid him of his sorrow, is cast into a terrible hell."

"People of the lowest grade in society such as oilmen, potters, the outcasts (lit., those who cook and feed on the flesh of a dog), the Kirātas and Kolas and the distillers of spirituous liquors get their heads shaved and enter the order of Saṁnyāsa (renunciation) when their wife is no more in this world and they have lost their household property. They allow themselves to be worshipped by the Brāhmaṇas and bring ruin to themselves here as well as hereafter." *

It is heard and observed too that these days impostors, masquerading as devotees, holy men, men of wisdom, Yogīs and exalted souls, persuade people to repeat their names and contemplate on their form, and violate their own sanctity as well as that of others by inducing people to sip water in which their feet have been washed and partake of their leavings. Everyone should always beware of such impostors; for association with such persons puts a premium on one's vices and misconduct and ultimately leads to one's fall. Contrary to this, we should consider him as a striving devotee of no mean order and endowed with divine virtues, whose sight, speech, talk and fellowship manifests in us the divine traits described in verses 1—3 of Discourse XVI of

* जे बरनाधम तेलि कुम्हारा । स्वपच किरात कोल कलवारा ॥
नारि मुई गृह संपति नासी । मूँड मुङ्डाइ होहिं संन्यासी ॥
ते बिप्रन्ह सन आपु पुजावहिं । उभय लोक निज हाथ नसावहिं ॥

the *Gītā* and arouses the feeling of Devotion. The characteristics of such striving devotees have been described in verses 13 and 14 of Discourse IX as follows—

“On the other hand, Arjuna, great souls, who have clung to the divine nature, worship Me with none else in their mind, knowing Me to be the prime source of all lives and the imperishable Eternal. Constantly chanting My names and glories and striving for My realization, and bowing (again and again) to Me, those devotees of firm resolve, ever united with Me (through meditation) worship Me with single-minded devotion.” *

The fellowship of such persons, cultivated with reverence and devotion, must result in manifesting Divine traits in us and arousing the feeling of devotion to God. If it does not, it should be concluded that either the striving devotee whose fellowship we are cultivating is wanting in some respect or we are deficient in faith and devotion.

If, however, the company even of such advanced strivers as are free from passions is not available, we should fall upon the company (study) of true scriptures inasmuch as their company too is as good as the company of holy men. Through a reverent and loving study of the *Vedas*, *Smṛti* texts, the *Gītā*, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Bhāgavata* and other epics and *Purāṇas* as well as other similar books dealing with spiritual wisdom, dispassion and right conduct and by cherishing and carrying out in practice the teachings contained in such books too one is able to develop detachment from the world and love for God and in course of time turns out to be a real devotee and, knowing God in essence, comes to realize Him.



* महात्मानस्तु मां पार्थ दैवीं प्रकृतिमात्रिताः । भजन्त्यनन्यमनसो ज्ञात्वा भूतादिमव्ययम् ॥
सततं कीर्तयन्तो मां यतन्तश्च दृढव्रताः । नमस्यन्तश्च मां भक्त्या नित्ययुक्ता उपासते ॥

Let God Never be Forgotten

The best thing for man is not to let God slip out of his mind even for a moment. The man who has undertaken a vow not to forget God even for an instant bids fair to realize Him in this very birth; there is no room for the least doubt about it. The Lord says in the Gītā—

अनन्यचेताः सततं यो मां स्मरति नित्यशः ।
तस्याहं सुलभः पार्थ नित्ययुक्तस्य योगिनः ॥

(VIII.14)

“Arjuna, whosoever always and constantly thinks of Me with undivided mind, by that Yogī ever absorbed in Me I am easily attainable.”

Pinning one’s faith on this assurance of the Lord, one should make a resolve to the effect that thenceforward one would not let God slip out of one’s memory till one’s last breath. If such a resolve is true, God lends support to it and fulfils the devotee’s desire in the long run. Even if there is any occasional lapse, the Lord forgives it. One may argue on this point that a man can remember God during the waking hours, but it does lie in his power to do so during the hours of sleep. It should be remembered in this connection that, as a rule, in the dream-state a man’s mind remains absorbed in the thought of that very occupation in which he has kept himself engaged during his waking hours. It has been observed that those who constantly remember God during their waking hours remain absorbed in His thought even in dream. Nay, even they who take to the remembrance of God shortly before falling into sleep and are overtaken by sleep in the course of their remembrance generally

continue to see dreams connected with God. Therefore our endeavour should be not to forget God as long as we keep awake. We should not deliberately forget God even for a moment; for, if we perchance breathe our last the moment God slips out of our memory and we allow animals or birds, insects or moths, men or gods enter our mind, we shall be transferred in our next birth to the womb of a sub-human creature corresponding to our thought—

यं यं वापि स्मरन्भावं त्यजत्यन्ते कलेवरम् ।
तं तमेवैति कौन्तेय सदा तद्वावभावितः ॥

(Gītā VIII. 6)

“Arjuna, thinking of whatever entity one leaves the body at the time of death, that and that alone one attains, being ever absorbed in its thought.”

What an enormous wreck it is of human life ! When we reflect on the difficulty of attaining human birth we are enabled to gauge, to some extent, the appalling magnitude of this wreck. When the soul gets wearied after passing through the eight million and four hundred thousand species of life, God shows His exceptional grace to the Jīva by granting him a human form—

कबहुँक करि करुना नरदेही । देत ईस बिनु हेतु सनेही ॥

(Rāmacaritamānasa, Uttarākāṇḍa)

The Lord prescribes the following recipe for ensuring that this rare boon of a human birth is not wasted—

तस्मात्सर्वेषु कालेषु मामनुस्मर युध्य च ॥

(Gītā VIII. 7)

“Therefore, Arjuna, think of Me at all times and fight.”

The Lord has stressed in the aforesaid half-verse the necessity of remembering Him as of primary value and the advisability of waging war as of secondary importance. From this emphasis on God-remembrance it is clear that

there should be no break in the remembrance of God even for a moment; otherwise our human birth is liable to prove a failure.

They who fix their mind on God are sure to realize Him—

तेषां सततयुक्तानां भजतां प्रीतिपूर्वकम् ।
ददामि बुद्धियोगं तं येन मामुपयान्ति ते ॥

(Gītā X. 10)

“On those ever united through meditation with Me and worshipping Me with love, I confer that Yoga of wisdom through which they come to Me.”

That is why the Lord enjoins Arjuna as follows—

मथ्येव मन आधत्स्व मयि बुद्धिं निवेशय ।
निवसिष्यसि मथ्येव अत ऊर्ध्वं न संशयः ॥

(Gītā XII. 8)

“Therefore, fix your mind on Me and establish your intellect in Me alone : thenceforward you will abide solely in Me : there is no doubt about it.”

When the Lord so assuringly urges us to fix our mind and establish our intellect in Him, to what other useful purpose can our mind and intellect be employed ? From this very moment, therefore, both of them should be yoked to the service of God.

To set one's intellect on God means to remain established in the thought that God who is a compact mass of Consciousness and Bliss, is uniformly present everywhere in the form of joy; that joy and joy alone fills all space and that there is nothing but joy. Such a contemplation automatically leads to God-realization. It should be thoroughly impressed on one's mind that God alone is uniformly present everywhere—both above and below, outside as well as inside oneself.

To contemplate with the mind in the light of the aforesaid conviction of the intellect is what is meant by fixing one's mind on God. This too results in God-realization.

To think of anything whatsoever other than God is just like strangling oneself to death; for thereby we shall be missing the goal of human existence. The thought even of the most precious thing in this world cannot enable us to realize God. Therefore, with great perseverance we should so discipline our mind that it may take delight in the thought of nothing else than God. Time is most precious. Only a fixed number of respirations as a human being have been allotted to us. We cannot hope to survive a single minute more even by spending a lakh of rupees. The value of even a moment of human existence cannot be estimated, because any moment can enable us to realize God. What, then, shall we say of the entire human life? This importance of human life lies in the very fact that it can be instrumental in our realizing God. This is not possible in any other life. Therefore, great care should be observed in spending the time of our human life. Saints have branded them as fools who spend their time in pursuits other than those relating to God.

Time employed in accumulating mundane objects too is spent in vain. Suppose in our business we make a profit of one lakh of rupees per month. This will mount to twelve lakhs in twelve months. But of what avail is all this to us? The bags of money would remain lying here, while the soul will have to depart all alone. Of course, the sins and virtues which it has accumulated in hoarding that money would undoubtedly accompany it. Therefore two things should be kept in mind in this connection—firstly, God should not be forgotten for the sake of accumulating money, and secondly sinful ways should not be adopted for that purpose. We shall have no connection with that money after death. A

donkey carries heaps of clay on its back and piles them. To hoard money forgetting God is no better than this. The money hoarded by us will be of no more use to us after death than the clay piled by the donkey. Following this line of thought why should human life be wasted in collecting money?

Some people spend their time in nourishing the body. It is waste of time to employ it in nourishing this perishable body. What will be the gain to us if by a course of special diet and by tending the body with particular care we are able to put on, say, 20 pounds of more flesh? Death is inevitable in the end. If the body gets exceptionally bulky, the remains too will be equally ponderous. The bearers of the bier would groan under its weight and say, "The corpse is too heavy." What good is such corpulence? Such a bulky body, when cremated, will yield a few more pounds of ashes. Of what use, however, can the ashes of a corpse be? Falling into the eyes of a passer-by it would only cause him pain. Therefore it is no good spending one's time in enhancing the weight of one's body.

No time should be devoted even to the maintenance of one's family with a mind full of attachment and oblivious of God. Attachment for one's family is all the more agonizing. The family has been betraying us from time immemorial. Even in our previous birth we belonged to some family. Do we remember anything about it now? We have no longer any idea as to where we lived and to what family we belonged in our previous birth. Even so, on leaving this body, our ties with this family too will be forgotten. After, say, a century or two, no one knows to what remote regions will this family of ours be transplanted. Therefore, to forget God and fritter away one's time in looking after and maintaining with great infatuation and attachment a family

with whom all connection will be completely severed the moment we die, constitutes a perversion of our human existence.

It would be equally foolish on our part to spend our time over the construction of a house and forget God. Even when the house has been constructed, who knows by whom it will be used? Whosoever needs a house will have it constructed himself. Why should we squander our invaluable human life over its construction by sacrificing our scruples for it. The same remarks apply to other objects of the world. Whatever objects and possessions in this world we consider as our own do not actually belong to us! They are sure to part from us. Therefore, it is not desirable to forget God in our endeavour to accumulate and preserve them. From the spiritual point of view all pursuits other than those indulged in from the motive of God-realization are either futile or harmful. This human life has been vouchsafed to us only for achieving the redemption of the soul and not for indulging in fruitless enjoyments. It is useless to strive even for heavenly enjoyments. Says Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa—"Even heavenly enjoyment is short-lived and ends in sorrow."*

Therefore it is sheer folly to take to any pursuit which is not helpful in redeeming the soul. Life is ebbing fast every moment. Hence the purpose for which we have come should be accomplished. We cannot be sure when death may overtake us. Nobody can foretell what is going to happen the next moment. Under such circumstances, it is not safe to let God slip out of our mind even for a second.

Every mundane object with which we are connected is bound to part from us. Realizing that all relationships with this body are assumed and evanescent, we had better

* स्वर्गद स्वल्प अंत दुखदाई।

(Rāmacaritamānasa, Uttara. XL III.1)

withdraw our attachment and infatuation for such relationship before we die. We shall be liberated if we consciously do so; in case, however, we have to snap these ties under compulsion, we shall have to revolve in the vortex of transmigration. He who is born needs must die. Any amount of endeavour cannot save us from death. When death is inevitable, it matters little whether it comes a few days earlier or later. It is needless to worry about it. The object of our life must be achieved at all events. Otherwise we shall have to repent bitterly afterwards. Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa says in his *Rāmacaritamānasa*—

सो परत्र दुख पावङ् सिर धुनि धुनि पछिताइ ।
कालहि कर्महि ईस्वरहि मिथ्या दोस लगाइ ॥

(Uttara. 43)

“He reaps torture in the other world and beats his head in remorse, wrongly attributing the blame to Time, Fate and God.”

God will have to be realized by one's own efforts. Nobody else can do this for us. Any worldly undertaking, if left unaccomplished by us, can be completed by our successors or others after our death; but if we fail to realize God, we shall have to be born again. Therefore, time should be devoted to that work alone which can be done by us only and which is unavoidable.

All worldly ties are false, unsubstantial as a dream and of an illusory nature. All that happens in the dream-world appears to be real, but it has no real existence. The moment we wake up, the body as seen in the dream as well as its activities disappear. Even so all worldly ties are coeval with the body alone. All our ties will cease the moment we give up the ghost. Hence it is necessary that we mentally renounce these relationships beforehand so that we may not have to repent afterwards.

Everything can be achieved so long as the human life is there. Taking shelter in God, a man can accomplish whatever he likes. God Yama tells Naciketā in the Kaṭhopaniṣad—“Naciketā, this appellation of God, the syllable ‘Om’, is no other than Brahma. This alone is the personal God and the impersonal Absolute. By betaking oneself to it one can attain the desired object.”

Hence, taking refuge in God, we too can do whatever we would. Secondly, no desire other than that of realizing God should be entertained. It is sheer folly to seek anything else. All that exists in the world is governed by destiny. One cannot live to an age of one hundred years merely by wishing it. Similarly death too will not come to us if we wish that it should forthwith come to us. Events will shape themselves according to our destiny. Therefore, it is foolish to entertain desires. Similar is the case with regard to the attainment or otherwise of objects of sense-enjoyment. One would get as much as one is destined to get and that too at the appointed time.

God-realization is the fruit of one's longing. God comes face to face with us the moment our longing acquires the required degree of intensity and exclusiveness. Excepting God no other object is responsive to our seeking for it. All living beings in the world seek happiness and not misery. But a large majority of them suffer misery. Therefore, it is sheer folly to crave for material objects; they cannot be had by merely seeking them. They can be procured only by a propitious destiny, which is the fruit of our past good actions and which is no more in our hands. God, however, can surely be realized through mere seeking. Therefore, one should seek to realize God and should endeavour to make that longing ardent and exclusive to the requisite degree.

As a matter of fact, it is we who are to blame for the

delay in realizing God. The Lord, on His part, is ever impatient to meet us; only we have to develop the aforesaid type of longing. With a view to awakening such a longing in us we should wail in seclusion laying bare our heart before the Lord. Recalling our sinful acts we should pray to God in a choked voice: "Lord! excepting Yourself whom shall I call my own? Master! I am at Your mercy; pray, protect me." The Lord is extremely kind-hearted. He instantly forgives the sins committed in innumerable lives of the man who betakes himself to Him.

The soul should be elevated from more to more with speed. Our spiritual practice today should be keener than it was yesterday and tomorrow it should be keener still. Similarly, our practice at midday should be keener than it was in the morning; in the evening it should be keener than it was at midday; at night it should be keener than it was in the evening and the next morning it should be still keener. Nay, the intensity of our practice should grow from hour to hour and later on from minute to minute, nay, from second to second. If our endeavour is progressive in this way, God-realization should not be delayed.

A Hindi poet says, 'पाय परम पद हाथ सौं जात'—i.e., "The highest prize of life, though within one's hand, is now eluding our grasp." To fritter away one's human life is really tantamount to forfeiture of the highest good. Therefore,

"Let the dead past bury its dead;
Act, act in the living present."

The period of our life that has already been spent is now out of our reach; henceforward, however, not a single moment should be allowed to pass without the thought of God. One should be constantly on the alert. Provided we are fully persistent in our endeavour, the remaining period of our life is quite enough for our redemption. God can be

realized even during this period. There is no cause for fear even if some deficiency remains; in that case you can be redeemed in your next birth—

“योगिनामेव कुले भवति धीमताम् ।

(Gītā VI. 42)

“He is born in the family of enlightened Yogīs.”

And his mind is naturally inclined towards dispassion. Through the contact of noble souls in his next birth his mind constantly gets more and more sublimated and finally he is able to realize God.

Nowadays a recording machine worked with electric power is much in vogue. It records any sound produced before it. Now, wherever the record goes, the sound recorded by it travels with it. Similarly, all that we do in the course of our lifetime gets imprinted on our mind and accumulated in the shape of impressions that accompany us even after death. These good and bad impressions are responsible for our good and bad impulses in the future life. Therefore, the evil impressions that are being accumulated in the mind as a result of our multifarious activities in this life should be wiped off before we breathe our last. As a piece of cloth is washed clean with the use of soap and water, so the dirt of sin deposited in our mind should be removed with the soap of the Divine Name and the water of disinterested action. Only noble impressions should be accumulated in the mind and intellect. Knowledge is a good thing to store in the mind. Knowledge about the highest reality alone is real knowledge. Sāttvika propensities like firmness, forgiveness, serenity, even-mindedness, contentment, wisdom, dispassion etc., should be stored in the intellect. Contemplation on the Divine essence and thoughts about Divine virtues, glory and mysteries of God should be collected in the mind. We should mentally dwell on the

Lord's name, form, pastimes and His Divine realm. The senses should be purified in the fire of askesis. Then with such senses let us directly see God, speak Him with, touch His person and so on. Let us picture to ourselves that the Lord is standing before us and looking at us, that we are touching His feet and enjoying the divine aroma emanating from them; that we are conversing with God and hearing His voice with our ears. With our hands we should render service to every living being viewing it to be an image of God. Our speech should be employed in uttering truthful, agreeable and wholesome words. With our eyes we should behold only God, holy men and sublime scenes. Sublimating all the senses in this way, they should be charged with only such leanings as help in attaining Liberation. Even if we fail to attain our goal in this life, we should at least see that good predispositions accompany us hereafter. It is extremely profitable to do all this in a disinterested spirit. Through vigilant practice evil predispositions of the mind in the form of vices, immoral propensities, evil addictions, impurity, distraction, obtuseness, sleep, langour, carelessness etc., are wiped off very soon and the heart is filled with devotion, the light of wisdom, dispassion, moral virtues and other excellences. As a matter of fact, Divine virtues and austerity of body, speech and mind are nectar-like; whereas Rājasika and Tāmasika impulses are like poison and sure to bring about the downfall of man.

The best and the easiest of all spiritual practices is contemplation on God. One should carry on this practice lovingly and constantly everyday. But even if there is no love, contemplation on God purifies the heart in any case. A man attains blessedness even if he contemplates upon God from animosity, malice or fear. Mārīca contemplated upon Lord Śrī Rāma from fear and was liberated. Kaṁsa

contemplated on the Lord from malice and he too was blessed. Under such circumstances there can be no doubt about the deliverance of those who contemplate upon God with love and emotion. The example of the Gopīs of Vraja is known to all. The cowherdesses contemplated upon the Lord with emotion; and hence their liberation was assured. Therefore, wherever the mind goes it should think of God and God alone. One should go to sleep at night while thinking of God. Whenever one's sleep gets disturbed during the night or one is required to get up, one should be vigilant and see whether contemplation is going on or not.

When one sits all alone for doing Japa or other spiritual practices, one must begin by praying to the Lord and hymning His praises. Nay, one should also read the Gītā and the Rāmāyaṇa and other sacred books in an intelligent manner and with reverence and love and without a selfish motive.

The Vedas admonish us in the following words—

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।

“Awake, arise and seeking the great, learn the truth (from them).”

One had better wake up in time; otherwise, “repentance will be of no avail when it is too late to mend.”

Death will hang over your head and all your merriment will be spoiled. How sternly does Tulasīdāsa warn us when he says—

जो न तरै भवसागर नर समाज अस पाइ ।
सो कृत निंदक मंदमति आत्माहन गति जाइ ॥

(Rāmacaritamānasa, Uttarakāṇḍa 44)

“The man who, though equipped with all these resources, fails to cross the ocean of metempsychosis is ungrateful and dull-witted and meets the fate of a self-murderer.”

Therefore, he who does not redeem his soul though born in the best of lands, the best of races, the best of aeons

and the best of faiths, and though placed in the best of surroundings and having thus secured a best combination of circumstances, is none else than a fool. Says Nārāyaṇasvāmī—“Do not forget two things—Death on the one hand and God on the other.” By keeping God in mind sins get eradicated and blessedness is attained; whereas the thought of death precludes the further commission of sins.

If you are unable to do anything else, go on repeating any name of God that catches your fancy. That alone will enable you to attain blessedness. A Hindi poet says—

केसव केसव कूकिये, नहिं कूकिये असार।
रात दिवस की कूक तें कबहुँ तो सुनै पुकार॥

“Loudly repeat the name of Keśava, don’t cry nonsense. In the event of your calling Him day and night He is sure to hear your cry some day.”



Work for the Sake of God and the Secret of Divine Mercy

By following a course of spiritual discipline connecting all living beings and inanimate objects, actions as well as mental attitudes with God, a striver can maintain enthusiasm, even-mindedness, cheerfulness, tranquillity and remembrance of God in his heart at all times. In this way one can easily realize God by developing supreme reverence and love for God. By doing one's own household duties or transacting the business of one's shop or doing the work of any charitable institution as a work of one's own beloved Lord and himself working as a servant of God with the feeling that all that exists including oneself belongs to God, who pervades all (*Gītā* XVIII. 46), so that rendering service to all the only way of serving God, that whatever one does he does as impelled by God and for His sake alone, and that God alone is one's supreme beloved and greatest well-wisher, a striver never feels bored; on the other hand, his enthusiasm, cheerfulness and tranquillity of mind go on increasing from more to more. If this does not happen, let him ponder seriously what may be the reason. Investigation will reveal that lack of faith and reverence alone is responsible for such a state of affairs. With a view to making up the deficiency the striver should seek the protection of the Lord, extol and piteously pray to Him and realize His virtues, glory, truth and mystery.

The mission of popularizing the *Gītā* is directly God's own work. There is no doubt about it. He who propagates the teachings of the *Gītā* after comprehending its meaning

and purport gets redeemed and earns the highest pleasure of God. In this connection a reference is invited to *Gītā* XVIII. 68-69—

य इमं परमं गुह्यं मद्दत्तेष्वभिधास्यति ।
 भक्तिं मयि परां कृत्वा मामेवैष्यत्यसंशयः ॥
 न च तस्मान्मनुष्येषु कश्चिचन्मे प्रियकृत्तमः ।
 भविता न च मे तस्मादन्यः प्रियतरो भुवि ॥

“He who, offering the highest love to Me, preaches the most profound gospel of the *Gītā* among My devotees, shall come to Me alone; there is no doubt about it. Among men there is none who does Me a more loving service than he; nor shall anyone be dearer to Me on the entire globe than he.”

The entire life of the man who has thoroughly grasped the meaning and purport of both these verses is spent in popularizing the *Gītā*. At present whatever endeavour at propagating the teachings of the *Gītā* is seen or heard of, is mainly attributable to the knowledge of the meaning and purport of both these verses.

Therefore, propagation of the teachings of the *Gītā* is God's own work, which is had by the special grace of God. It cannot be got by spending money.

To do God's work, to carry out His commands, is service to the Lord Himself. Really by doing this work in a spirit of service to God, joy and peace can undoubtedly be attained. If they are not, one has not been able to reckon God's work as service to God. If anyone recognizing an exalted soul as such does his work, carries out his commands in a spirit of service to him, he cannot contain himself for joy; how much more joy and peace one would have by doing service to God!

If God-remembrance, joy, enthusiasm, love and peace

do not abide in the heart of those who are carrying on the work of popularizing the *Gītā*, what they should do is to investigate its cause and eliminate by falling back upon the mercy of God the fault which may be found to be responsible for the absence of these characteristics. God's mercy extends on all in an infinite measure. It is due to our not realizing this truth fully that we remain deprived of joy and peace of mind. We fail to realize even one hundredth of the consummate unbounded mercy of God that we are heir to. But even though we may fail to realize it, we should continue to remember that we enjoy His boundless mercy. By doing so we can hope to realize it later on.

A story is reproduced below to enable us to comprehend fully the reality about the mercy of God. The story runs as follows—

A Kṣatriya boy was studying in a college with the state help and under state control. His parents always impressed upon him the fact that the ruler of that kingdom was a man of wisdom, Yogi and an exalted soul of a high order. He was unaccountably kind and compassionate and was exceptionally kind to them. If they were to die, he had no cause to worry; for the king was far more kind to him than they. The boy believed exactly as he was taught by his parents. His parents died in due course; but the boy did not feel sad. His fellow-students in the college approached him and said, "How is it that even though your parents are no more, there is no sign of grief on your expression? Who is going to support you now?" The Kṣatriya boy replied, "Why should I be sorry! The king, who is my greatest well-wisher, is more kind and affectionate to me even than my parents. He is a man of wisdom and an exalted soul of a high order. I solely depend on him." The principal of the college was struck with wonder when he heard these words

of the boy through his fellow students, and admired his reverence for and devotion to the ruler of the kingdom. The principal happened to be a member of the State Council too. He attended a subsequent meeting of the Council. The king too was present in that meeting. He said, "If there is any orphan boy in the State, he should be reported to me, and excellent arrangements made for his maintenance by the State." More than one members of the State Council named that very boy. Thereupon with the concurrence of all the councillors the king made all arrangements for his boarding etc., and ordered his mud hovel to be converted into a pakkā one. As regards his education it was already being conducted at State expense.

After a few days when, under orders of the king, his men were demolishing his Kaccā house in order to convert it into a Pakkā one, a class-fellow of the said Kṣatriya boy went running up to him and informed him that the king's men were razing his house. The boy was immensely delighted to hear his report and said, "Oh ! the king is very gracious to me. In all probability he will get anew house built for me after demolishing the old one." The principal of the college felt amazed at this remark of the boy and thought how firm the boy's conviction was and how strong his faith in the king's goodwill.

On another occasion when the principal of the college attended a meeting of the Council, the king told the councillors that he had grown old, and was issueless. He, therefore, wanted to know the sense of the councillors as to whom he should nominate as his successor worthy of the office. At this the principal said that the Kṣatriya lad excelled all in point of merits, right conduct and education. He was loyal and had unlimited faith in his majesty. The other members of the Council also gladly supported this proposal. With full

consensus of opinion the king thereupon decided to appoint that very Kṣatriya lad as his successor.

The next day the king's minister and some other high officials of the state called on the boy at his residence. Seeing them come the Kṣatriya boy received them with great honour and attention and said, "Of what service can I be to you?" The officials told him that the king was extremely kind to him. The boy said, "I am already aware of the fact that I enjoy the unbounded grace of his majesty. It is for this very reason that you too are so kind to me." The officials said, "We are your servants and as such seek your favour." The boy replied, "Pray, do not put me to shame by uttering these words. I am your humble servant. That his majesty is kind to me is very well-known to me." The officials said, "His kindness far exceeds your estimate about it." The Kṣatriya boy wanted to know whether his majesty had arranged his marriage. "Not only that," they replied; "He is excessively kind to you." The boy asked again : "Has his majesty been pleased to make a formal grant in my favour of a few villages?" The officials replied, "This is nothing as compared to his actual grace on you, the extent of which cannot be gauged by you." The boy thereupon said, "Pray, tell me, then, what his graciousness on me is like." They replied, "He has appointed you to be his successor; hence we seek your favour." Hearing this the Kṣatriya boy was beside himself with joy.

Now let us try to understand the spiritual significance of the above parable. The enlightened and exalted soul in the person of the king is no other than God. The Kṣatriya boy represents the faithful seeker of enlightenment. The parents are the preceptors. The classmates of the Kṣatriya boy stand for the fellow-seekers on the path of knowledge. The principal cum councillor symbolizes a loving Mahāpuruṣa.

The arrangement of the boarding of the Kṣatriya boy at State expense should be taken to be a symbol of favourable circumstances, while the demolition of his house by the State should be regarded as symbolical of unfavourable circumstances. The boy's remaining cheerful in either case regarding both the events as a favourable gesture on the part of the king illustrates how a devotee having faith in God rejoices under all circumstances, viewing every occurrence as a benign dispensation of God. The boy's absolute dependence on, unquestioning faith in and profound reverence for the king based on his conviction about the latter being his true well-wisher should be regarded as symbolical of a devotee's resignation to the will of God.

From the above illustration we should derive a lesson, viz., that the measure of Divine grace we enjoy far exceeds our estimate of it. We cannot even gauge the extent of Divine mercy extending on us. If we come to realize that mercy, our joy, like that of the Kṣatriya boy of the parable, will know no bounds, and we shall forget our very existence.

Therefore, remembering God at all times, we should ever remain steeped in joy, regarding whatever comes to us through our own will or through the will of another or without either as a benign dispensation of the Lord and looking upon our own actions as God's work and as the greatest service to Him.

In this way through the practice of devotion to God the mind of the striver is filled with delight, his hair stands on end and lachrymation sets in. His heart blooms with joy, his voice begins to falter and throat gets choked. When as a result of continuous practice, however, a man wins perfection—realizes God, he transcends all hilarity, festivity and delight etc., and attains supreme peace and joy. When a pie is fried in a pan containing ghee, it leaps and tosses about—

displays special activity—only till it is not completely fried. But as soon as it begins to get fried its jumping decreases and when completely fried it becomes quiet and stationary. Similarly, during the period of Sādhanā, so long as the Sādhanā is unripe, the striver jumps and bursts into joy brought about by his Sādhanā, which seeks expression through horripilation, lachrymation and choking of the throat etc. But when his spiritual practice begins to ripen, the ebullition of emotions like joy begins to slow down; and when his Sādhanā is fully ripe, the striver becomes free from emotional fluctuations and gets supremely peaceful. Getting fixed and stabilized in God, he then attains God, the very embodiment of supreme peace and highest bliss.

□ □

Value of Contemplation on God While Dying

The scriptures tell us about two aspects of the Godhead, viz., with attributes or relative and the absolute. Of these, the absolute is as a matter of course without form. The Saguna aspect, again, is both—with and without form. Whoever leaves this body thinking of anyone of these three aspects of the Godhead is rid forever of this mundane existence and realizes the Supreme Spirit, the transcendent Reality. It is the realization of that Supreme Spirit, the transcendent Reality, which is spoken of under various names such as the Unmanifest (Avyakta), the Indestructible (Akṣara), the Supreme Goal (Parama Gati) and the highest realm (Parama Dhāma) of God—

अव्यक्तोऽक्षर इत्युक्तस्तमाहुः परमां गतिम् ।
यं प्राप्य न निवर्तन्ते तद्वाम परमं मम ॥

(Gītā VIII. 21)

“The same Unmanifest which has been spoken of as the Indestructible, they (also) call the Supreme Goal; that again, is My supreme Abode, attaining which they never return (to this mortal world).”

The Lord says that he who departs from this world with his thought focussed on Him attains Him—

अन्तकाले च मामेव स्मरन्मुक्त्वा कलेवरम् ।
यः प्रयाति स मद्भावं याति नास्त्यत्र संशयः ॥

(Gītā VIII. 5)

“He who departs from the body, thinking of Me alone even at the time of death, attains My state: there is no doubt about it.”

Here one may accuse the Lord of partiality in that He redeems those who remember Him and ignores those who fail to do so. But such is not the case in reality. The Lord, on the other hand, looks on all with an equal eye and is anything but partial. He is equally gracious to all. The general rule, however, is that a man attains after death that very embodied existence (viz., that of a heavenly being, man, beast, bird, tree or mountain) which is the object of his thought at the moment of death in this life—

यं यं वापि स्मरन्भावं त्यजत्यन्ते कलेवरम् ।
तं तमेवैति कौन्तेय सदा तद्वावभावितः ॥

(Gītā VIII. 6)

“Arjuna, thinking of whatever entity one leaves the body at the time of death, that and that alone one attains, being ever absorbed in its thought.”

Pointing out this principle, the Lord exhorts Arjuna, to fight the enemy with his mind and intellect dedicated to Him and with his thought constantly riveted on Him, the Saguṇa manifest Divinity, assuring him that he will thereby attain to Him.

तस्मात्सर्वेषु कालेषु मामनुस्मर युध्य च ।
मव्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्मिवैष्यस्यसंशयम् ॥

(Gītā VIII. 7)

“Therefore, Arjuna, think of Me at all times and fight. With mind and reason thus set on Me, you will doubtless come to Me.”

The Saguṇa manifest Divinity in the form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa being present by his side on the chariot as his very charioteer, it was easy for Arjuna to fix his thought on Him and, as has been pointed above, one is naturally reminded, even at the moment of death, of the object of one's constant thought. Hence he who leaves his body while thinking of the

Saguṇa manifest Divinity attains to the Saguṇa manifest Divinity: there is no doubt about it.

Having pointed out the above fact, we now proceed to see how God-realization takes place as a result of contemplation on the Saguṇa formless Divinity. Even he who dies contemplating on the Supreme Spirit or the supremely effulgent Person, otherwise known as the all-pervading Saguṇa formless Divinity attains to God by virtue of that contemplation.

अभ्यासयोगयुक्तेन चेतसा नान्यगमिना ।
 परमं पुरुषं दिव्यं याति पार्थानुचिन्तयन् ॥
 कविं पुराणमनुशासितारमणोरणीयांसमनुस्मरेद्यः ।
 सर्वस्य धातारमचिन्त्यरूपमादित्यवर्णं तमसः परस्तात् ॥
 प्रयाणकाले मनसाचलेन भक्त्या युक्तो योगबलेन चैव ।
 भ्रुवोर्मध्ये प्राणमावेश्य सम्यक् स तं परं पुरुषमुपैति दिव्यम् ॥

(Gītā VIII. 8—10)

“Arjuna, he who with his mind disciplined through Yoga in the form of practice of meditation and thinking of nothing else, is constantly engaged in contemplation of God attains the supremely effulgent Divine Puruṣa (God).”

“He who contemplates on the all-wise ageless Being, the Ruler of all, subtler than the subtle, the universal Sustainer, possessing a Form beyond human conception, resplendent like the sun and far beyond the darkness of ignorance, having by the power of Yoga firmly held the life-breath in the space between the two eyebrows even at the time of death, and then contemplating on God with a steadfast mind, full of devotion, he (surely) reaches that Supreme Divine Puruṣa (God).”

That Supreme Spirit, otherwise known as the supremely effulgent Person, is unmanifest, formless and all-pervading and the whole of this universe stands comprised in an iota

of that Supreme Spirit. Even as the aggregate of all the four elements, viz., air, fire, water and earth stands comprised in the one unmanifest and formless ether, and ether pervades all these four, so does the Supreme Spirit extend within and without all created beings and the entire order of created beings exists in a minute particle of that Supreme Spirit.

पुरुषः स परः पार्थ भक्त्या लभ्यस्त्वनन्यया ।
यस्यान्तःस्थानि भूतानि येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ॥

(Gītā VIII. 22)

“Arjuna, that eternal unmanifest Supreme Puruṣa in whom all beings reside, and by whom all this is pervaded, is attainable only through exclusive Devotion.”

Even as one attains to God through contemplation on the Saguna manifest Divinity as well as on the Saguna formless Divinity, so does the man who leaves his body contemplating on the Nirguna formless Brahma attains to the Nirguna Brahma, that is all-Truth, all-Consciousness and all-Bliss and constitutes the highest goal. Glorifying that very Brahma, the Lord says—

यदक्षरं वेदविदो वदन्ति विशन्ति यद्यत्यो वीतरागाः ।
यदिच्छन्तो ब्रह्मचर्यं चरन्ति तत्ते पदं संग्रहेण प्रवक्ष्ये ॥

(Gītā VIII. 11)

“I shall tell you briefly about the Supreme Goal (viz., God, who is all-Truth, all-Consciousness and all-Bliss), which the knowers of the Veda term as the Indestructible, which striving recluses free from passion enter, and desiring which the celibates practise Brahmacharya.”

The same Nirguna formless Brahma has been referred to as the supreme Indestructible.

‘अक्षरं ब्रह्म परमम्’

(Gītā VIII. 3)

This very indestructible Brahma is called by the name

of Om. That is why he who leaves his body while repeating the sacred syllable Om and contemplating on the object denoted by it, viz., the Nirguna formless Brahma, that is all-Truth, all-Consciousness and all-Bliss, reaches the Supreme Goal, viz., the Supreme Spirit.

ओमित्येकाक्षरं ब्रह्म व्याहरन्मामनुस्मरन् ।
यः प्रयाति त्यजन्देहं स याति परमां गतिम् ॥

(Gītā VIII. 13)

Thinking as aforesaid of any of these three aspects of the Godhead, the knower of Brahma attains to Brahma by the bright path—

अग्निज्योतिरहः शुक्लः षण्मासा उत्तरायणम् ।
तत्र प्रयाता गच्छन्ति ब्रह्म ब्रह्मविदो जनाः ॥

(Gītā VIII. 24)

“(Of these two paths) the one is that in which are stationed the all-effulgent fire-god and the deities presiding over daylight; the bright fortnight and the six months of the northward course of the sun respectively; proceeding along it after death Yogīs who have known Brahma, being successively led by the above gods, finally reach Brahma.”

The word 'Jyotiḥ' in the above-quoted verse is an adjunct qualifying 'Agni', which in its turn stands for the god presiding over the element of fire. He is endowed with a form consisting of ethereal effulgence. His dominion extends over the entire space above the globe including the oceans, and his duty consists in uniting with the deity presiding over daylight the qualified soul departing along the route controlled by the deity presiding over the six months when the sun takes a northerly course. The god of fire keeps under his care the soul which leaves its mortal encasement during the nocturnal hours till sunrise, when he hands it over to the deity presiding over daylight; while he

commits the soul giving up the ghost during the daytime to the latter's care at once.

Similarly the jurisdiction of this latter deity (the deity presiding over the diurnal hours) extends over the limits of the terrestrial region, that is, so far as the earth's gravitation acts; and his duty lies in escorting the soul journeying along the route controlled by the deity presiding over the six months of the sun's northward journey across his frontiers and committing it to the care of the deity presiding over the bright fortnight.

The jurisdiction of the deity presiding over the bright fortnight extends even beyond the limits of the terrestrial plane over the whole of the aerial region, where the sun shines continuously for fifteen human days and the nights too are equally long. His duty consists in taking the soul along the route controlled by the deity presiding over the six months of the sun's northerly course across his frontiers and committing it to the latter's charge.

The six months during which the sun takes a northerly course are collectively known as the *Uttarāyaṇa*. The words 'Saṁmāsā Uttarāyaṇam', occurring in the verse quoted above, stand for the deity presiding over this period. His jurisdiction extends beyond the aerial region over the plane where the sun shines for six human months at a stretch and the nights too are equally long; and his duty is to take the soul bound for the Lord's own highest realm across his own frontiers and entrust it to the care of the deity presiding over a full twelvemonth (*Samvatsara*), mentioned in the *Upaniṣads*. The deity presiding over a twelvemonth in his turn takes it still further to the realm of the sun-god. The sun-god personally delivers it to the charge of the moon-god and the latter in his turn makes it over to the care of the deity presiding over lightning. The Lord's own divine attendants arrive in person in the realm of

the latter and take the blessed soul to the Lord's own supreme realm, where he meets the Lord Himself.

Having reached that Supreme Goal, the soul no longer returns to the cycle of births and deaths in this mortal plane. The soul that goes up to the realm of Brahmā (the creator) has to return to the mortal plane and is reborn in a lower or higher state of existence according to the nature of its past Karma; for Brahmā and his realm both are finite—

आब्रह्मभुवनाल्लोकाः पुनरावर्तिनोऽर्जुन ।

(Gītā VIII.16)

A full cycle of four Yugas (viz., Satya, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali) constitutes one celestial Yuga. Of these, the Kali age consists of 4,32,000 human years; Dvāpara is twice as long as Kaliyuga and has a duration of 8,64,000 years; Tretā is thrice as long as the Kali age and extends to 12,96,000 years; while Satyayuga is four times as long as Kaliyuga or extends to 17,28,000 years. In this way a celestial Yuga is made up of 43,20,000 years or is ten times as long as Kaliyuga. The measure of time of gods is 360 times longer than the human measure. Now a cycle of one thousand celestial Yugas (consisting of 4,32,00,00,000 years) constitutes a day of Brahmā and his nights too are of equal duration.* Having completed full 100 years of his allotted span of life according to this measure Brahmā too disappears along with his realm. A comprehensive account of this has been given in verses 64 to 73 of Chapter I of the Code of Manu.

The bodies of all animate and inanimate beings emerge at the beginning of a day of Brahmā from his unmanifest and formless being and return to it at the end of the day.

* सहस्रयुगपर्यन्तमहर्यद्ब्रह्मणो विदुः ।
रात्रिं युगसहस्रान्तां तेऽहोरात्रविदो जनाः ॥

(Gītā VIII. 17)

अव्यक्ताद् व्यक्तयः सर्वाः प्रभवन्त्यहरागमे ।
रात्यागमे प्रलीयन्ते तत्रैवाव्यक्तसंज्ञके ॥

(Gītā VIII. 18)

Finite as they are, as has been shown above, Brahmā and his realm too disappear at the expiry of their allotted span. The Supreme Spirit, however, who is all-Truth, all-Consciousness and all-Bliss, does not cease even when all these have disappeared.

परस्तस्मात् भावोऽन्योऽव्यक्तोऽव्यक्तात्सनातनः ।
यः स सर्वेषु भूतेषु नश्यत्सु न विनश्यति ॥

(Gītā VIII. 20)

“Far beyond even this Unmanifest, there is yet another Unmanifest Existence, that Supreme Divine Person, who does not perish even though all beings perish.”

By dint of ceaseless effort man realizes the Supreme Spirit, otherwise known as the supremely effulgent Person; for God-realization is easy of access to him who ceaselessly remembers Him. The Lord says—

अनन्यचेताः सततं यो मां स्मरति नित्यशः ।
तस्याहं सुलभः पार्थ नित्ययुक्तस्य योगिनः ॥

(Gītā VIII. 14)

“Arjuna, whosoever always and constantly thinks of Me with undivided mind, to that Yogi, ever absorbed in Me, I am easily attainable.”

When God can be attained in this very life by him who strives as aforesaid, it is much easier to realize Him at the hour of death. It is no uphill task to remember God every moment either. And he who realizes God no longer returns to this mundane existence consisting of suffering.

मामुपेत्य पुनर्जन्म दुःखालयमशाश्वतम् ।
नाप्नुवन्ति महात्मानः संसिद्धिं परमां गताः ॥

(Gītā VIII. 15)

Skipping over the entire mundane plane, he reaches God, the Supreme Goal, once for all—

वेदेषु यज्ञेषु तपःसु चैव दानेषु यत्पुण्यफलं प्रदिष्टम् ।
अत्येति तत्सर्वमिदं विदित्वा योगी परं स्थानमुपैति चाद्यम् ॥

(Gītā VIII. 28)

“The Yogi, realizing this (profound) truth, (doubtless) transcends all that reward which has been ascribed in the scriptures to the study of the Vedas, as well as to (the performance of) sacrifices, austerities and charities, and attains the beginningless supreme state.”

Chapter VIII of the Gītā thus describes the unique glory of focussing one’s thought on God at the time of death. Hence to a man lying on his death-bed this chapter should invariably be given to hear with its purport in his own mother tongue. Even if it is not possible to repeat the whole of this chapter, an effort should be made to repeat in particular at least the verses quoted above with their purport in his own language; for, if a man treasures in his heart even one of these foregoing verses after grasping its import, he can be easily redeemed. It is much easier to remember God at the moment of death, for him who ever keeps in his mind any aspect of the Godhead—Saguṇa or absolute, with form or without form.



How to Practise Exclusive Devotion?

[The Parable of a Girl]

The Lord says in the Gītā—

मत्कर्मकृन्मत्परमो मद्भक्तः सङ्गवर्जितः ।
निर्वैरः सर्वभूतेषु यः स मामेति पाण्डव ॥

(XI. 55)

“Arjuna, he who performs all his duties for My sake, depends on Me, is devoted to Me, has no attachment and is free from malice towards all beings, reaches Me.”

The parable of a girl is narrated below in order to illustrate the method of practising exclusive Devotion. In a village in Rājasthāna there lived a pretty damsel aged fourteen years. Seeing that the girl had reached the marriageable age, her father was constantly on the look-out for a match. Once her father approached a highly respectable and learned Brāhmaṇa and told him that it was high time that his daughter was married. The Brāhmaṇa made inquiries here and there and after selecting a good match said to the girl’s father, “The boy in question bears an excellent moral character, is highly accomplished, well-behaved, wealthy and good-looking too. There is none like him. It is difficult to find such a boy. But he has no parents.” The Brāhmaṇa sent word to the boy as well telling him that the girl was very beautiful, well-behaved and young. In this way by persuading both the Brāhmaṇa arranged a match between the two. The alliance having been contracted, the Brāhmaṇa brought and delivered a loin-cloth, an upper garment (consisting of a piece of cloth to cover one’s upper

body with), a bodice, a pair of anklets etc., for the feet, a bejewelled girdle, five pairs of gold bracelets, bangles, a pair each of wristlets and armlets etc., a gold ornament for the neck, a pearl necklace and so on, a nose-ring, a pair of earrings and pendants for the ears, a crest-jewel as well as auspicious articles such as vermillion, scent for the girl by her fiance. The girl put on the wearing apparel as well as the ornaments brought for her and sought the presence of her girl-companions, who were all greatly pleased to see her well dressed and adorned, and inquired of her whether all those articles had been received by her from her fiance. The girl felt abashed to hear this question and kept mum. One of those companions was a wicked girl. She spoiled one of her bracelets. The girl felt aggrieved at this and apprised her father of the incident. The latter comforted her, got the bracelet mended and complained about the misbehaviour of her girl-companion to the latter's father. He then reported the whole matter to the Brāhmaṇa who had arranged the match and urged him to have the wedding fixed for an early date.

The Brāhmaṇa approached the fiance and said, "The girl is very sensible. Some one defaced one of her bracelets. Taking it as an ill women she went and gave vent to her grievance before her father. The father got the bracelet mended. She reverently preserves and takes care of the raiment and ornaments sent by you. Her father has requested you to celebrate the marriage at an early date." On this the bridegroom agreed to have the marriage solemnized soon. Shortly afterwards he fixed the date, and taking a wedding party with him, reached the house of the girl's father for the marriage. When the hour of wedding drew near, the bride put a garland round the boy's neck and the nuptials were duly solemnized. Afterwards the bridegroom took the girl

along with him to his place. There the practice was not to send the bride back to her parents' home. Anyone desirous of meeting her could see her at her husband's alone. Her husband only could send her to her father's place whenever he deemed it necessary. She could not go at the wish of anyone else. Such a contingency hardly arose during the lifetime of a bride.

Now let us try to understand the meaning of the parable. The girl of the parable typifies an individual who is solely devoted to the Lord. The fourteen years that she passed in this world before her wedding represent the following fourteen virtues characterizing such a devotee, viz., fearlessness, *Sāttvika* mentality, control of the mind and senses, absence of anger, absence of egotism and the sense of meum, selflessness, refraining from vilification of others, remaining unaffected by sense-enjoyment, softness; refraining from idle pursuits, a majestic bearing, fortitude, freedom from animosity and alacrity in renouncing honour, fame and prestige. Comeliness of form typifies faith and reverence. Youth represents love which is ever on the increase. The father of the girl typifies one's greatest well-wisher putting one on the Godward path. The highly learned *Brāhmaṇa* who arranged the match represents a God-realized saint. The Lord Himself is the parentless fiance. The loin-cloth represents the feeling of meticulousness in honouring social conventions : while the upper garment typifies one's scrupulousness in following the injunctions of the *Śāstras*. The bodice represents the power of enduring heat and cold. Anklets and other ornaments for the feet represent the act of resorting on foot to places of pilgrimage, temples and exalted souls in order to have a look at them with the object of realizing God. The girdle represents the act of girding up one's loins and embarking on a sustained and lifelong

endeavour to realize God. The five bracelets worn about the right wrist represent the five forms of self-restraint or Yamas as they are technically called. The Yamas have been enumerated in the “Aphorisms on Yoga” as below—

अहिंसासत्यास्तेयब्रह्मचर्यापरिग्रहः यमाः ।

(II. 30)

“Harmlessness (Ahimsā), truthfulness (Satya), non-thieving (Asteya), continence (Brahmacarya) and non-acquisition of property (Aparigraha) constitute the (five) Yamas.”

1. Ahimsā consists in undertaking a vow never to inflict the slightest pain on any account in anyway on any living being whatsoever.

2. Satya consists in a vow to represent a fact precisely as one has heard of, understood or seen it, neither overstating nor understating it, and to utter words which are free from equivocation, wholesome in the real sense and agreeable.

3. Asteya consists in a vow not to appropriate through theft, violence, cheating or any other means anything whatsoever belonging to another.

4. Brahmacharya consists in a vow not to see, touch, speak to, hold conversation with, hear the words of, remain closeted with, think of, or jest with lascivious intent and have sexual commerce with anyone, or in other words not to indulge in any unchaste behaviour with any individual in thought, word and deed.

5. Aparigraha consists in a vow not to acquire anything for the sake of one’s own ease, comfort or enjoyment.

Taken together, all the five aforesaid Yamas when universally practised without regard to time, place, species or occasion are known as a Mahāvrata (the supreme vow)—

जातिदेशकालसमयानवच्छिन्नाः सार्वभौमा महाव्रतम् ।

(II. 31)

In the same way the five bracelets worn round the left wrist of the girl represent the five Niyamas or sacred vows. The Niyamas have been enumerated in the *Yoga-Sūtras* as below—

शौचसंतोषतपःस्वाध्यायेश्वरप्रणिधानानि नियमाः ॥

(II. 32)

“Internal and external purity (*Śauca*), Contentment (*Santoṣa*), Asceticism (*Tapas*), Study of sacred books (*Svādhyāya*) and Self-surrender to the Lord (*Īśvara-Pranidhāna*) constitute the (five) sacred vows.”

1. *Śauca* denotes purity of body and mind. Bodily or external purity consists in cleanliness, whereas internal purity signifies the absence of impressions on the mind of vices and immoral practices.

2. *Santoṣa* consists in remaining ever reconciled, nay gratified, with agreeable and disagreeable conduct and mental attitude of others, objects and circumstances.

3. *Tapas* consists in controlling one’s mind and senses and enduring in a spirit of self-abnegation hardships in the form of observing fasts and undergoing other austerities with a view to discharging one’s sacred obligations.

4. *Svādhyāya* consists in reading and grasping the meaning and spirit of sacred books such as the *Upaniṣads*, *Smṛti* texts, *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas* and other books dealing with Devotion, Self-realization, Dispassion and good morals.

5. *Īśvara-Pranidhāna* consists in repeating with faith and reverence and in a disinterested spirit the names of God such as “*Om*” and focussing one’s thought on His divine essence and taking refuge in Him.

Ornaments for the arms such as bangles and bracelets, wristlets and armlets typify service, worship of God and other deities, sacrificial performances, charity and good

offices done to others with the hands. The gold ornament for the neck represents the act of memorizing verses of the *Gītā*, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Bhāgavata* etc., bearing on Bhakti, Jñāna and Vairāgya.

Ornaments for the bosom such as the necklace of pearls typify excellent qualities of the heart like forgiveness, compassion, serenity, even-mindedness, generosity, spiritual enlightenment and aversion for the pleasures of sense. The nose-ring represents the perception with one's nose of the ethereal odour emanating from the divine personality of the Lord. The earrings represent the act of hearing a description of the excellences, glory, essential character, mysteries and divine pastimes of the Lord; while the pendants represent one's feeling of gratification on one's being reproached and reviled. The crest-jewel represents the act of humbly and lovingly bowing one's head to all. Vermilion, which is an emblem of wifely good-luck, typifies unflinching and single-minded devotion to the Lord marked with exclusive love.

The fellowship of girl companions represents the company of one's fellow-seekers. The blushing of the girl, on her being complimented upon by her companions for her dress and ornaments, represents the bashfulness of the aspirant on his uncommon virtues and excellent conduct being praised by his friends; and like the bashfulness of the girl in the parable this constitutes her greatness. The wicked companion defacing one of the bracelets of the girl represents an intruder interfering with the *Sādhanā* of the aspirant; while the act of defacing the bracelet represents the mischievous attitude of standing in the way of one's following the daily routine of devotions etc. The act of having the bracelet mended represents the attempt on the part of a friend and well-wisher of the aspirant to reshape his routine on a sound

footing. The way in which the girl's father, on seeing the girl grown up and fit for marriage as well as keen on being married, prevails on the learned Brāhmaṇa to exert pressure on the fiance to expedite the wedding, illustrates how on seeing the aspirant fit for God-realization and keen to meet the Lord his friend and supreme well-wisher pleads with a God-realized soul to bring him face to face with the Lord. The way in which the learned Brāhmaṇa apprises the fiance of the girl's excellences, good disposition and conduct illustrates how a God-realized soul apprises the Lord of the aspirant's superlative virtues, amiable disposition and excellent moral character. The fiance's consent to have the marriage celebrated at an early date represents the Lord's resolve to appear in person before the aspirant. As a rule the Lord cannot be perceived by dint of one's personal effort; he can be seen by him alone whom He chooses. In the Kathopaniṣad we read—

नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यो न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन।
यमेवैष वृणुते तेन लभ्यस्तस्यैष आत्मा विवृणुते तनूःस्वाम्॥

(I. ii. 23)

“The aforesaid (supreme) Self can neither be realized through exposition nor through sharp acumen nor again through extensive learning. It can be realized only by him whom It chooses; (for) it is to him that this Self reveals Its truth.”

The bridegroom's visit to the bride's residence represents the Lord's appearing in person before the aspirant and the way in which the bride puts a garland round His neck illustrates how the aspirant offers a garland to the Lord on seeing Him. The nuptials represent the devotee's union with the Lord and the bride's departure to the bridegroom's residence typifies the devotee's ascent to the Lord's own supreme realm (after death). The bride's not being allowed

to return to her parent's home represents the devotee's permanent residence in heaven precluding his return to this mortal world; while the bride's returning to her parent's home as and when desired by her husband typifies how the devotee returns to this world in cases of special emergency with a view to redeeming the denizens of this globe in obedience to the Lord's command and with the authority delegated by Him.

This parable of a girl has been narrated only in order to illustrate how to practise exclusive devotion to the Lord. An aspirant should try to emulate the noble example of the girl depicted in the parable. The striver practising exclusive Devotion should ever remain immersed in the joy of devotion, divine illumination and dispassion. He should constantly practise Nāma-Japa and meditation on the divine essence in a disinterested spirit with reverence and devotion as well as with perseverance and zeal. As a result of this practice the superlative virtues and excellent character as depicted above can automatically manifest themselves in a man. Then constant meditation with exclusive love becomes habitual and natural for a high-souled striver endowed with the divine heritage in the form of the superlative virtues and excellent character delineated in the above lines. The Lord says in the Gītā—

महात्मानस्तु मां पार्थ दैवीं प्रकृतिमाश्रिताः ।
भजन्त्यनन्यमनसो ज्ञात्वा भूतादिमव्ययम् ॥

(IX. 13)

“On the other hand, Arjuna, great souls who have embraced the divine nature, knowing Me as the prime source of all lives and the imperishable Eternal, worship Me constantly with none else in mind.”

Therefore, in order to be able to follow the course of

discipline pointed out above a striver should cultivate the fellowship of holy men. Failing this he should advance his Sādhanā by cultivating the company of fellow-seekers. If even that is not available, he should read with reverence, love and dispassion books dealing with devotion, self-illumination and dispassion and depicting the virtues, glory, essential character and mysteries of God, keeping his eye on their meaning and spirit.



The Glory of Constant Contemplation on God

There is no spiritual discipline equal in value to an unbroken remembrance of any aspect of God, with form or without form, Saguna or absolute. This course of discipline is easy to follow. It speedily leads to God-realization. If we are not able to realize God in the course of this human existence, it will mean a tremendous loss, a great disaster. Says the *Upaniṣad*—

इह चेदवेदीदथ सत्यमस्ति न चेदिहावेदीन्महती विनष्टिः ।

(*Kena*, II. 5)

“If a man is able to realize God in this life its purpose will have been achieved; if, however, he fails to do so in the course of this life, it would spell a terrible ruin (for him).”

For, if a man dies with the thought of anyone or anything other than God foremost in his mind, he goes down to a wretched state of existence. He attains after death the same state of existence—viz., the state of a human being, god, animal, bird, insect or moth—which occupies his mind at the time of his death. The Lord says in the *Gītā*—

यं यं वापि स्मरन्भावं त्यजत्यन्ते कलेवरम् ।
तं तमेवैति कौन्तेय सदा तद्वावभावितः ॥

(VIII. 6)

“Arjuna, thinking of whatever entity one leaves the body at the time of death, that and that alone one attains, being ever absorbed in its thought.”

We do not know at what moment death will overtake

us. If we meet a sudden death and fail to remember God at the last moment, we shall be exposing ourselves to a great risk. Therefore, we should perform all our duties remembering God every moment. The Lord says to Arjuna in the *Gītā*—

तस्मात्सर्वेषु कालेषु मामनुस्मर युध्य च।
मर्यपितमनोबुद्धिर्मामेवैष्यस्यसंशयम् ॥

(VIII. 7)

“Therefore, Arjuna, think of Me at all times and fight. With mind and reason thus set on Me, you will doubtless come to Me.”

We shall surely attain God if we continue to remember Him at all times. Therefore, not a moment should be allowed to pass without remembering God.

Go on doing what you are about with your body and senses: but let no one other than God engage your thought. Ordinarily man naturally remains engaged in a twofold activity all the time. For example, while we are answering the calls of nature and washing the body or eating and drinking etc., with our organs of action, our mind remains engrossed in idle thought. My request, however, is that you may continue to do with your organs of action whatever you have hitherto been doing in the shape of answering the calls of nature, washing yourself and attending to your vocational duties in order to make your living, but never let God slip out of your mind. Even if there is any deficiency or shortcoming in the discharge of your worldly duties, it can be rectified by dint of constant God-remembrance. For, however great a sinner may be, he gets reformed and redeemed through exclusive devotion to God. The Lord says to Arjuna—

अपि चेत्सुदुराचारो भजते मामनन्यभाक्।
साधुरेव स मन्तव्यः सम्यग्व्यवसितो हि सः ॥

क्षिप्रं भवति धर्मात्मा शश्वच्छान्ति निगच्छति ।
कौन्तेय प्रति जानीहि न मे भक्तः प्रणश्यति ॥

(Gītā IX. 30-31)

“Even if the vilest sinner worships Me with exclusive devotion, he should be accounted a saint; for he has rightly resolved (He is positive in his belief that there is nothing like devoted worship of God). Speedily he becomes virtuous and secures lasting peace. Know it for certain, Arjuna, that My devotee never falls.”

From this it should be concluded that failings and foibles can be overcome without any exertion by dint of exclusive devotion to God; but if any shortcoming persists in exclusive devotion, it would mean a serious loss; for such a deficiency cannot be made up by itself.

Therefore, this human body should be devoted to that very purpose for which it has been vouchsafed to us. God has gifted us with discrimination, the faculty of reason and the faculty of judgment, which should be made use of; and waking up from the slumber of infatuation, we should seek the presence of exalted souls and, learning from them the truth about God, which is the only thing worth knowing, should work our own salvation. We read in the Kāthopaniṣad—

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।

(I. iii. 14)

“Rise, wake and approaching the great, learn the truth (from them).”

Therefore, efforts should be made to accomplish the object of God-realization before the human frame drops down. The Lord says—

अनित्यमसुखं लोकमिमं प्राप्य भजस्व माम् ॥

(Gītā IX. latter half of 33)

“Therefore, having obtained this joyless and transient human life, constantly worship Me.”

Even if in the course of our efforts in the direction of constant contemplation on God the body falls, our salvation is ensured. If, however, the body drops down at a time when the mind is not contemplating on God, repentance will be of no avail.

Therefore, one's object should be achieved before one's death. Even as it is no use digging a well after a fire has broken out, nothing will avail when the opportunity has been lost.

Śrī Bhartr̥hari has truly said—

यावत्स्वस्थमिदं कलेवरगृहं यावच्च दूरे जरा
 यावच्चेन्द्रियशक्तिरप्रतिहता यावत्क्षयो नायुषः ।
 आत्मश्रेयसि तावदेव विदुषा कार्यः प्रयत्नो महान्
 प्रोद्धीप्ते भवने तु कूपखननं प्रत्युद्यमः कीदृशः ॥

(Vairāgya-Śataka 86)

“A wise man should take great pains to work his own salvation while this dwelling in the shape of the human body is sound, senility is at a distance, the power of the sense-organs is unimpaired and life has not reached its end. Otherwise, what is the use of taking pains over the digging of a well when the house is on fire?”

King Bhoja says—

चेतोहरा युवतयः सुहृदोऽनुकूलाः
 सद्वान्धवाः प्रणयगर्भगिरश्च भृत्याः ।
 गर्जन्ति दन्तनिवहास्तरलास्तुरङ्गाः
 सम्मीलने नयनयोर्नहि किंचिदस्ति ॥

“You may have young women capable of captivating your mind, friends who are kindly disposed to you, kith and kin who are true to you, servants speaking words full of love, trumpeting elephants and fleet horses. But when

your eyes get closed (after death) nothing remains (with you)."

Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa says—

"Elephants may with temples wet

Through oozing ichor, and in chains
Adorn the gate; and horses too,

That beat the wind when giv'n the reins;
May kings not find a place in court;

Inside a moon-faced queen may reign;
But if no love is borne for Rāma,

Says Tulasīdāsa all goes in vain." *

The human mind is very fickle, erring by nature and foolish too. The truant boy neglects his lessons and takes to play, because he finds pleasure in it. Later on, as he grows in years and begins to understand things, he repents for his past errors and painfully realizes his folly in having neglected his studies and wasted his time in play. But repentance does not help him in anyway. In the same way, those men too have to repent bitterly, who, instead of taking to constant remembrance of God, take delight in sense-enjoyments, idle pursuits and sinful acts; Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa says again—

सो परत्र दुख पावङ्ग सिर धुनि धुनि पछिताङ्ग ।
कालहि कर्महि ईस्वरहि मिथ्या दोस लगाङ्ग ॥

(Rāmacaritamānasa VII. 43)

"He reaps torture in the other world and beats his head in remorse, wrongly attributing the blame to Time, Fate and God."

Srī Sundaradāsa also says—

* श्रूमत द्वार अनेक मतंग जँजीर-जरे, मद अंबु चुचाते ।
तीखे तुरंग मनोगति-चंचल, पौनके गौनहु तें बढ़ि जाते ॥
भीतर चंद्रमुखी अवलोकति, बाहर भूप खरे न समाते ।
ऐसे भए तौ कहा, तुलसी, जो ऐ जानकीनाथके रंग न राते ॥

“O Man! thou plannest num’rous schemes,
 Unfulfilled but they all would lie;
 Though striving million times, beyond
 Thy lot thou canst not earn a pie.
 At morn or eve Death suddenly
 Will come at some unknown moment
 ‘Not worshipped Rāma nor I performed
 A virtuous act,’ wilt thou repent.”*

If we just devote some thought to the subject, we shall realize that a very minute fraction of our time is spent in amassing the supreme riches in the shape of Sāttvika pursuits like fixing our mind on the name, form, virtues and glory of God, reading books and hearing discourses on spiritual subjects like Devotion, Self-knowledge, dispassion and right conduct and musing over what one has read and heard on these subjects. It will be found that a part of our time is spent in Rājasika pursuits like indulging in the delights of taste and the other senses, in luxuries and comforts, in worldly enjoyments and in pursuing honour, fame and prestige etc.,—activities which tend only to gratify the gross self. And the major portion of our time will be found being foolishly spent in harmful pursuits, sleep, lethargy, error, sin etc., which are all of a Tāmasika character. Therefore, making use of the faculty of reason, discrimination and good sense, with which we have been gifted by God, we should expostulate with the mind and, withdrawing it from selfish and harmful pursuits of a Rājasika and Tāmasika character respectively, it should be yoked to the highest pursuit in the shape of constantly meditating with reverence

* तू कछु और बिचारत है नर, तैरो बिचार धर्यौ ही रहैगो।
 कोटि उपाय करै धन के हित, भाग लिख्यौ तितनो ही लहैगौ॥
 भोर कि साँझ घरी पल माझ सु काल अचानक आइ गहैगौ।
 राम भज्यो न कियौ कछु सुकृत, सुंदर यों पछिताइ कहैगौ॥

and devotion and in a disinterested spirit on God. To devote the mind to this highest pursuit is to make the best use of it, while turning it in the opposite direction is to misuse it. The tendency of the mind has reached a very low level. Its tone can be improved only through grace of God by striving most diligently and persistently, depending on Him all the time.

At present we enjoy all sorts of facilities. This land of Bhāratavarṣa is eminently suited for spiritual effort. Again we are born in the supreme age of Kali, during which one's object can be speedily accomplished through spiritual effort carried on even for a short period. In such an exalted land and at such an exalted time God has vouchsafed to us this human birth and has further endowed us with a mind, intellect and senses for carrying on God-remembrance and meditation. At this time spiritual literature is also available at a low price. The fellowship of noble souls can also be obtained. If we fail to realize God even when blessed with such facilities, it will be a matter of great shame, woe and pity for us.

जो न तरै भवसागर नर समाज अस पाइ ।
सो कृत निंदक मंदमति आत्माहन गति जाइ ॥

(Rāma. Uttara; 43)

“The man who, though equipped with all these resources, fails to cross the ocean of metempsychosis, is ungrateful and dull-witted and meets the fate of a self-murderer.”

Hence we should give thought to the matter and should not forget God, who is our greatest well-wisher, even for an instant under pressure of lust, anger, greed, fear, pride, malice, hatred, sense of meum, attachment and ignorance, all of which lead to our downfall. Spurning the wealth and sovereignty of the three worlds in a spirit of dispassion we should constantly and lovingly contemplate on God alone.

There is no other occupation of such paramount utility for us as this. Then why should we devote our mind even for an instant to any other work? Hence we should strive till the end of our life to remember God at all times, whether moving or rooted to one place, standing or sitting, eating or drinking, asleep or awake. While doing Japa (muttering prayers) and practising meditation, saying our Sandhyā prayers and muttering the Gāyatrī-Mantra, doing worship and reading the sacred texts, chanting hymns and addressing prayers to the Lord in particular, one should lovingly fix one's mind without interruption on the essence of the Lord including His virtues and glory with reverence and faith in a disinterested spirit, fully comprehending the meaning and spirit of the sacred texts. At bedtime as well one should fall asleep while remembering the Lord with a concentrated mind. Even the period of sleep during the hours of the night can be converted into a period of meditation. For, the six hours or so that a man spends in sleep or dream are spent more or less in the same occupation in which he spends his waking hours. Therefore, withdrawing our mind from all other pursuits let us make it a point never to forget God. Through uninterrupted remembrance of God it is possible to overcome all one's evil propensities, immoral practices, evil addictions, excessive sleep, lethargy, error and other defects, to end all one's miseries and speedily attain supreme peace and the highest bliss in the form of God-realization. The author of the Bhāgavata says—

अविस्मृतिः कृष्णपदारविन्दयोः
 क्षिणोत्यभद्राणि शमं तनोति च।
 सत्त्वस्य शुद्धिं परमात्मभक्तिं
 ज्ञानं च विज्ञानविरागयुक्तम् ॥

(XII. xii. 54)

“Ceaseless thought of the lotus-like feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa puts an end to all evils and increases tranquillity (of the mind), enhances purity of the intellect, stimulates devotion to the Supreme Spirit and promotes spiritual enlightenment coupled with Self-realization and dispassion.”

तस्मात् सर्वात्मना राजन् हरिः सर्वत्र सर्वदा ।
श्रोतव्यः कीर्तितव्यश्च स्मर्तव्यो भगवानृणाम् ॥

(II. ii. 36)

“Therefore, O king, men should always and under all circumstances, and with their whole being listen to, recite and revolve in their mind the stories of Lord Śrī Hari alone.”

□ □

Glory of God and Exalted Souls

Unbounded is the glory of God, who is a storehouse of entire strength, power, glory, energy and vigour, nay, who is capable of bringing the impossible into the domain of possibility. Really speaking, the true nature and glory of God cannot be expressed in words. He alone knows God, who realizes His true nature. Even he cannot describe it in words. There is a parable illustrating this truth. Suppose a man of this mortal plane happened to reach a subterranean region where the sun, the moon and the stars are never to be seen and frightful darkness constantly prevails in consequence. When he had been there for a pretty long time he inquired of the denizens of that realm whether daylight never dawned there. They did not understand what he meant by daylight and inquired of him the meaning of it. He explained to them that by daylight he meant the flood of light that enveloped the quarters when the sun rose. Inquired as to what he meant by the sun, he told them that by the sun he meant a spherical body that appeared in the heavens in the form of a colossal mass of light.

Thereupon the denizens of that realm raised in the sky an electric bulb of thousands of watts of electric power; and, lighting it, they inquired whether the sun was something like that bulb. The man, however, replied that the bulb was nothing in comparison to the sun. They, however, urged that a stronger light was out of the question. The man, however, ordered to give them an ocular proof of what he said if they but sent anyone with him to the terrestrial plane. Thereupon they despatched one of them with him. When

the man returned to the mortal plane in the company of that denizen of the subterranean regions, the earth was enveloped with the murky darkness of midnight. It was the 15th day of a dark fortnight. Still there was more light here than in the subterranean world. The creature that had accompanied the mortal inquired whether that was what he meant by daylight. The man, however, replied that they were passing through the darkest hour of the night. The fellow then inquired about the stars that were twinkling in the vault of the heavens, and was told what they were called. At the approach of dawn, when the light of the stars grew faint and there was a semblance of light pervading everywhere, the fellow inquired again whether it was the daytime. The man said, "Not yet; it is only daybreak or morning twilight as it is called. The day will be reckoned only when the sun appears on the horizon about an hour later." The fellow then inquired as to how the light transmitted by the stars had grown faint. The man told him that the very light preceding the sun had bedimmed the light of the stars and that in the dazzling light of the sun even as it rose the stars would cease to appear even though continuing where they were.

Later on as the dawn drew nearer all the stars with the exception of Venus and Jupiter went out of sight; and when the sun had actually risen the two last-named also disappeared. The being that hailed from the subterranean world failed to gaze on the sun. He then beheld it through a plate of mica besmeared with soot even as we see it at the time of an eclipse to evade its dazzle. When the fellow had thus obtained firsthand knowledge about the sun as well as about the phenomena of day and night, his human companion took him once more to the subterranean world wherfrom they had come. Inquired as to whether he had seen the sun with his own eyes and also whether he had seen what day

and night were like, he replied in the affirmative. Asked to describe his experience in his own tongue, the fellow expressed his inability to do so, pleading that it was beyond his power to describe what he had seen through the medium of speech. He further urged them to go and see for themselves what the sun was like if they were keen to know what it was and added that there was no other way of knowing it.

Now let us ponder over this parable. When even he who has seen the sun with his own eyes cannot present a word-picture of the sun or daylight to those living in a realm where there is no sun nor daylight, how can a man describe in words the true nature and glory of God? A man can truly grasp the reality and glory of God only after realizing Him. But even then he cannot bring it home to others. What little of these is nonetheless brought home by the scriptures as well as by exalted souls is only a faint representation of God. The Lord has expounded His glory at many places in the *Gītā*; but the true nature and glory of God beats our comprehension even after we have grasped the meaning of the *Gītā*.

The Lord says in the *Gītā*—

यद्यद्विभूतिमत्सत्त्वं श्रीमद्भूर्जितमेव वा ।
तत्तदेवावगच्छ त्वं मम तेजोऽशसम्भवम् ॥

(X. 41)

“Every such being as is glorious, brilliant and powerful, know that to be a part manifestation of My glory.”

From this it should be concluded that whatever is endowed with glory, splendour and strength in this world, even when put together, represents only a fraction of the glory of God.

Hence the glory of God is immeasurable, boundless, infinite and indescribable. Through the sight, touch, nay, the very thought of, and through talk with, God in His

Saguṇa aspect endowed with form, the vilest sinner can be speedily redeemed. We are supremely benefited in either case—whether we remember the Lord or if the Lord remembers us. If we think of the Lord our heart bids fair to get supremely purified and we have every chance of being redeemed. If on the other hand the Lord thinks of us, we are sure to be supremely purified by entering the heart of the Lord and get redeemed in consequence. That is why while leaving Ayodhyā for his home, Aṅgada implored Hanumān to put Śrī Rāma in mind of Him from time to time. Says Aṅgada—

कहेहु दंडवत प्रभु सैं तुम्हहि कहउँ कर जोरि।
बार बार रघुनाथकहि सुरति कराएहु मोरि॥

(Rāmacaritamānasa VII. 19 (a))

Hence we should contemplate on the true nature of God at every time; for as a rule the Lord too remembers him who thinks of Him. Says the Lord—

ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम्।

(Gītā, IV Ist line of verse 11)

“Arjuna, howsoever men seek Me; even so do I approach them.”

Similarly we are sure to get purified if the Lord casts His look on us and can as well be purified and redeemed if we get to see the Lord. In this way we get supremely benefited in every case through contact with Him. It goes without saying, then, that one should be redeemed through talk with the Lord and through the touch of His feet.

Of course this does not happen when reverence for the Lord is lacking. Duryodhana, for example, was not redeemed even though he had the privilege of seeing and even talking with Him. Without reverence one cannot be redeemed even after reading and grasping the meaning of the Gītā, the very utterance of the Lord—

अश्रद्धानाः पुरुषा धर्मस्यास्य परंतप ।
अप्राप्य मां निर्वर्तन्ते मृत्युसंसारवर्त्मनि ॥

(Gītā IX. 3)

“Arjuna, failing to reach Me, people having no faith in this Dharma, revolve in the path of the world of death.”

He, however, who is endowed with reverence for the Lord and comes to know the truth and secret of His transcendent birth and exploits secures redemption. The Lord says—

जन्म कर्म च मे दिव्यमेवं यो वेत्ति तत्त्वतः ।
त्यक्त्वा देहं पुनर्जन्म नैति मामेति सोऽर्जुन ॥

(Gītā IV. 9)

“Arjuna, My birth and activities are divine. He who knows this in reality is not reborn on leaving his body, but comes to Me.”

It is to a reverent soul like Arjuna that the Lord confides the secret of His advent in the following words—

अजोऽपि सन्नव्ययात्मा भूतानामीश्वरोऽपि सन् ।
प्रकृतिं स्वामधिष्ठाय सम्भवाम्यात्ममायया ॥

(Gītā IV. 6)

“Though birthless and deathless, and the Lord of all beings, I manifest Myself through My own Yogamāyā (divine potency), keeping My Nature (Prakṛti) under control.”

Lacking in reverence and faith, stupid men endowed with a devilish, demoniac and delusive nature fail to know the truth relating to God and therefore despise the Lord (vide Gītā, IX.11-12). Such foolish men remain ignorant of His glory; hence the Lord does not reveal His identity before them and keeps Himself veiled by His Yogamāyā (enshrouding potency). The Lord Himself says—

नाहं प्रकाशः सर्वस्य योगमायासमावृतः ।
मूढोऽयं नाभिजानाति लोको मामजमव्ययम् ॥

(Gītā VII. 25)

“Veiled by My Yogamāyā (divine potency), I am not manifest to all. Hence these ignorant folk fail to recognize Me, the unborn and imperishable Supreme Deity (i.e., consider Me as subject to birth and death).”

Arjuna was a loving devotee of the Lord and full of reverence too. That is why the Lord unmasked Himself before him and told him in so many words that He was no other than the transcendent Infinite, the Supreme Spirit (Gītā IV. 6) and called upon him to betake himself to His care and be devoted to Him, assuring him that he would thereby find his abode in Him (Gītā IX. 34). Nay, summing up His teaching in Discourse XVIII, He says—

सर्वगुह्यतमं भूयः शृणु मे परमं वचः ।
इष्टोऽसि मे दृढमिति ततो वक्ष्यामि ते हितम् ॥
मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु ।
मामेवैष्वसि सत्यं ते प्रतिजाने प्रियोऽसि मे ॥

(Gītā XVIII. 64-65)

“Hear, again, My supremely secret word, the most esoteric of all truths. You are extremely dear to Me; therefore, I shall offer you this salutary advice. Give your mind to Me, be devoted to Me, worship Me and bow to Me. Doing so you will come to Me alone, I truly promise you; for you are (exceptionally) dear to Me.”

The Lord has also described His true nature at many places. He has delineated His absolute formless aspect in XII. 3, His Saguna formless aspect in VIII. 9, IX. 4—6 and 18 and His Saguna aspect in a cosmic form in XI. 5—7 of the Gītā. Requested by Arjuna to reveal His Saguna aspect in His well-known form with four-arms (vide Gītā XI. 46), the Lord appeared before Arjuna in His four-armed form, which stands described in XI. 50 of the Gītā. Hence it is the Lord alone who stands manifested in His absolute

aspect as well as in His Saguna aspect with form and without form. He, who comes to know the secret and glory of this truth is undoubtedly redeemed.

Similarly a man gets supremely purified and has every chance of being redeemed by looking with reverence on, touching the feet of, holding a talk with and contemplating on the devotees whom the Lord deputes to this world delegating His own authority or on any exalted soul already present in this world, to whom He chooses to delegate His authority; for whatever is seen, touched and pondered over by the Lord or His vicegerents get highly sublimated. The glory of such exalted souls is unique, transcendent, unearthly and immeasurable. Such exalted souls, however, are scarce among millions. The Lord says in the *Gītā*—

मनुष्याणां सहस्रेषु कश्चिद्यतति सिद्धये ।
यततामपि सिद्धानां कश्चिन्मां वेत्ति तत्त्वतः ॥

(VII. 3)

“Hardly one among thousands of men strives to realize Me; of those striving Yogīs, again, some rare one (devoting himself exclusively to Me) knows Me in reality.”

In the first place even those who have realized God are few and far between in the world. Of such God-realized souls, again, those enjoying authority delegated to them by the Lord are still more rare. The fellowship of these latter is exceedingly difficult to get. Even if it is had it is very difficult to recognize such men; for these men have no need to make themselves known, while the generality of men lack the capacity to recognize them. If it is urged that we can recognize them with the help of the distinguishing marks pointed out in II. 55—58, VI. 7—9, XII. 13—19 and XIV. 22—25 and so on of the *Gītā*, it is not so easy as it appears to be; for all these marks are such as can be known only by those who are endowed with them and not by

others. How, then, it may be asked, can we recognize such holy men ? In reply we submit that for our purpose an exalted soul is he whose sight and talk are able to manifest in us the characteristics mentioned above.

If we render service to, talk with and bow to exalted souls with reverence, many more such souls can be evolved out of the existing ones in the same way as a number of lights can be produced from one burning light provided there is oil and wick in the lamp. In the case of exalted souls faith in and reverence for them represent the oil and wick. Reverence consists in obeying the command of exalted souls. While carrying out their indirect suggestion indicates greater reverence. Still greater reverence consists in grasping their principles and following them or in other words in carrying out their wishes like an automaton. If you wish to put any question to them, you can politely do so with reverence and love in a guileless manner and in a spirit of inquiry after prostrating yourself before them. The Lord says to Arjuna—

तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया ।
उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥

(Gītā IV. 34)

“Understand the true nature of that knowledge by approaching illumined souls. If you prostrate at their feet, render them service, and question them with an open and guileless heart, those wise seers of Truth will instruct you in that Knowledge.”

The Lord has enjoined this on a seeker of knowledge but has nowhere asked an exalted soul to accept all this. Even though a seeker offers salutations and service to him, the exalted soul does not accept them; for there being no longer any individual consciousness identifying itself with his body, who would accept them? If, however, there is a

seeker of knowledge full of reverence and spirit of service, the exalted soul does not strongly oppose such a gesture from him. Utter indifference to external surroundings constitutes his very nature; for discretion, aversion to the pleasures of sense and quietism had become natural to him even when he was striving for realization.

Exalted souls of a high order never own a personality nor do they get others to worship them; for they neither claim the body as their own nor do they identify themselves with it. Whoever accounts himself an exalted soul and feels that others will be redeemed by offering him worship, homage, respect, honour and praise and exalting him is anything but an exalted soul; for it is highly ignoble to think highly of oneself and to entertain a low opinion about others, to account oneself an exalted soul and reckon others as ignorant. As has been pointed out above, an exalted soul neither claims the body as his own nor identifies himself with it, nor is there any individual consciousness connecting itself with his body. Who will seek honour, praise and exaltation under such circumstances? Those who seek them cannot be classed even as advanced strivers; they are on the other hand slaves of honour, praise, exaltation and so on!

It has been submitted above that the Lord keeps Himself veiled by His Yogamāyā in order to screen Himself from the view of those lacking in reverence. Even so exalted souls too who know this secret and are true followers of the Lord keep their reality disguised and live as ordinary men. But they cannot be blamed even if they unassumingly happen to disclose their state of God-realization to some really inquisitive and reverent soul through a gesture or suggestion. If with a view to educating the masses they conduct themselves in the ordinary way as a seeker of

knowledge or striver would do, even though they are God-realized souls really speaking, such conduct on their part does not detract in the least from their state of God-realization. If, on the other hand, an ordinary man poses to be an exalted soul and gets others to worship him as such, such a role would prove a burden to him. The *Gītā* tells us (vide III. 25) that with a view to educating the masses exalted souls follow in a disinterested and detached spirit the ways of the unenlightened, who carry out the injunctions of the *Śāstras* from interested motives. For fear of forfeiting the reward sought by them in the event of their failing to carrying out the injunctions of the *Śāstras* with scrupulous care, they carry them out with meticulous care, prompted as they are by expectation of reward. That is why there is little chance of their doing a thing desultorily or leaving anything to be desired. It is for this reason that though remaining free from desire, attachment and egotism, exalted souls carry out the injunctions of the *Śāstras* after the fashion of the unenlightened, who are prompted by desire with the object of educating the commonalty.

The true nature and glory of God and God-realized souls can be truly known only through their grace. Therefore, in order to secure their grace, one should throw oneself entirely at their mercy in a disinterested way and with reverence and devotion according to the spirit of *Gītā* IX. 34 and IV. 34.



Man is Free to Elevate or Degrade Himself

Scriptures like the *Gītā* have propounded numerous ways and means of realizing the Supreme Spirit—who is eternal wisdom and bliss solidified and who is the highest joy and supreme peace—after being entirely rid forever of all worldly miseries and evils. They further declare that the Supreme Spirit, which is the highest goal, being easy to realize, can be realized in no time. Exercise of the faculty of reason and investigation lead us to this conclusion. Since, however, the realization does not actually take place it appears to be difficult. This leads to a sort of despair and the progress in the *Sādhanā* is neither rapid nor satisfactory, nor uninterruptedly uniform. Why is it so and what is the remedy? Such are the questions asked by many a striver. Our reply to this question is that due to failure to comprehend correctly the true import and secret of the words of the scriptures and utterances of exalted souls we are unable to develop full faith in the goal to be reached and the means of attaining it. This lack of faith and reverence is responsible for slackening our interest in spiritual endeavour. This engenders a sort of despair and prevents us from constantly pursuing our spiritual discipline with application.

To guard against this the striver should first of all critically and thoroughly grasp the reality and inwardness, and form an idea, of the goal with the help of the scriptures and through the fellowship of saints. Secondly he should understand that there is no other objective greater than God and that without realizing Him there is no escape for the

individual soul from this ocean of mundane existence, which is full of suffering and that without deliverance from the ocean of birth and death the individual soul can never attain lasting and supreme peace. Therefore, fixing one's eyes on this goal in the shape of God, one should carefully and diligently march along anyone of the paths pointed out by the scriptures. Then alone can one realize God, the great reality worth attaining.

Suppose a man seeks to proceed from Calcutta to Varanasi and the road leading to it is clear and he is also in possession of a means of transport in the shape of a motor-car. The foremost part of the car is also provided with two electric lights which constantly illumine the way ahead up to a distance of two furlongs. But the man is overtaken by a pitch dark night and the road is bounded on both sides by ditches and bushes and the man himself is the driver. Therefore, if he drives steadily and cautiously, he can soon reach the destination. But if, getting drunk with wine, he drives carelessly he has every chance of falling into the ditches and thorny bushes by the side of the road and thus endangering his life and motor-car too.

The above is a parable. This is only intended to illustrate a truth relating to the realm of spiritual endeavour. What is referred to in the parable by the name of Varanasi typifies the Lord's own supreme realm. The man seeking to reach Varanasi from Calcutta typifies the man who is keen to escape from the world of matter and attain God-realization. The unobstructed and smooth road to Varanasi represents the triple path of Action, Devotion and Knowledge. The motor-car represents the human body. The two big lights with which the car is provided in the forefront and which constantly illumine the way ahead represent the faculties of judgment and reasoning. The pitch dark night represents the

obscurity caused by infatuation, which is rooted in ignorance. The ditches and the jungle on both sides of the road represent the vices and immoral conduct with which a striver finds himself tempted right and left. The fact of the traveller driving the car himself points to the freedom of action which a striver enjoys. The ability of the traveller to reach his destination speedily on his driving the car steadily with caution is intended to illustrate the truth that the striver can speedily realize God by discreetly and uninterruptedly pursuing his *Sādhanā* or course of discipline with alacrity and zeal. The eventuality of the driver getting drunk with wine points to the contingency of the striver falling a prey to error through thoughtlessness and the possibility of his contracting vices and lapsing into immoral conduct is what is sought to be conveyed by the fact of the driver having every chance of endangering his life as well as the car by slipping into a ditch or the jungle.

A striver should, therefore, always remain wide awake, alert and ever devoted to the course of his spiritual discipline. Slackness in *Sādhanā* should never be allowed to creep in. First of all a striver should decide for himself as to which of the three paths recommended in the *Gītā* and other scriptures, viz., *Karmayoga*, *Bhaktiyoga* and *Jñānayoga*—the paths of Action, Devotion and Knowledge—is suitable for him. The way to decide this is deliberately to select for himself anyone of the aforesaid three paths which conforms to his capacity, intelligence and understanding and which evokes his reverence, faith and interest. For that is precisely the easiest, the best and the most useful path for him. So long as a man does not determine his goal and the way to reach it, he can never attain it. After determining the course he should start treading on it and while walking he should be careful not to deviate from it and take to a reverse or wrong course. Doubt, delusion,

ignorance, attachment, error and langour are the factors leading to carelessness. Deluding a man by extending tempting hopes of happiness to him, they throw him into the abyss of degradation. Hence all these should be entirely given up; for man is free to abandon them.

A man neither feels inclined to do a thing which he intellectually regards as deprecable nor is he able to give it up; on the other hand, he desires to do a thing which he considers to be good, yet he finds himself unable to do. In this way failure to give up that which is worth giving up and to do what is worth doing; this is what they call perversion (प्रमाद). Man's ignorance alone is at the root of this perversion. But due to foolishness man ascribes it to his destiny, other individuals, circumstances, his past actions and the spirit of the times and some hold even God responsible for it. But, really speaking, none of these comes in the picture. All this is his ignorance. In fact the entire responsibility rests on his own shoulders, inasmuch as he is absolutely unfettered in renouncing forbidden acts; evils such as anger, greed, infatuation, partiality and prejudice; immoral practices such as lying, cheating, thieving, violence and adultery; evil addictions like drinking, and idle pursuits such as witnessing games and shows. He is similarly free in cultivating Devotion, Self-Knowledge, Yoga, dispassion, virtues, good conduct etc. But due to ignorance he denies all responsibility, laying the whole blame at others' doors. That is an evil habit of his. Some strivers plead that all the courses of spiritual discipline such as Yoga (control of the mind), Devotion, Self-Knowledge, dispassion, the cultivation of virtues and good conduct etc., which are conducive to God-realization, are intelligible to them, that they also recognize them as beneficial, that they have faith in and reverence for them and that they also feel interested in them,

yet they are unable to pursue them. But if the matter is fully investigated, it will be clear that they have failed to recognize spiritual discipline as of supreme benefit to them. Lack of faith and reverence alone is responsible for our not being able to recognize the supreme benefit of spiritual discipline. Therefore the matter requires to be deeply pondered.

When we come to know that a certain sweetmeat contains poison, we do not like to eat it even if we are starving. In the same way when we come to regard perversion to be equally harmful we shall never do anything which is not worth doing and shall do without fail what is worth doing. Once we recognize God-realization to be of utmost benefit to us and failure to realize God a very great loss how shall we be able to view with equanimity any deficiency in or interruption of our endeavour for it? On the other hand we shall bitterly repent for it and feel unhappy over it. Nay, we shall pine for the object to be attained and writhe in anguish due to lack of it. We shall not rest content till we have secured it. If this does not happen lack of faith and reverence alone is responsible for it. This accounts for the slackness of interest which in its turn makes for lack of enthusiasm and assiduity. Hence a striver himself is to be blamed for slackness in his endeavour. No other individual, destiny, circumstance, place, time, action or God is responsible for it.

God, exalted souls and our sacred books, on the other hand, are helpful to the striver. A man can take any amount of help from them. Man is free even in taking help from them. Due to ignorance, however, he comes to regard God as responsible for his sinful deeds and quotes the following verse in support of his belief—

जानामि धर्मं न च मे प्रवृत्तिर्जनाम्यधर्मं न च मे निवृत्तिः ।
केनापि देवेन हृदिस्थितेन यथा नियुक्तोऽस्मि तथा करोमि ॥

(Pāndavagītā)

“I know what is right, yet I feel no urge for the practice of virtue, I know even that which is unrighteous; yet I am unable to recoil from it. I do as I am prompted to do by some unknown deity installed within my heart.”

This, however, is the view-point of Duryodhana, which is altogether worth dismissing. The most sublime doctrine on this point is that of the *Gītā*, which embodies the utterances of the Lord Himself, with respect to the commission of sins. Arjuna puts the following question to the Lord—

अथ केन प्रयुक्तोऽयं पापं चरति पूरुषः ।
अनिच्छन्ति वाष्णवं बलादिव नियोजितः ॥

(*Gītā* III. 36)

“Now impelled by what, O Kṛṣṇa, does this man commit sin even against his wish, as though driven by force?”

In reply to it the Lord says—

काम एष क्रोध एष रजोगुणसमुद्भवः ।
महाशनो महापाप्मा विद्ध्येनमिह वैरिणम् ॥

(III. 37)

“It is desire, begotten of the element of Rajas, which appears as wrath; nay, it is insatiable and grossly wicked. Know this to be the enemy in this case.”

The Lord speaks of desire as born of *Rajoguṇa* and *Rajoguṇa* is but another name for attachment. The Lord has already said to Arjuna—

ध्यायते विषयान्पुंसः सङ्गस्तेषूपजायते ।
सङ्गात्संजायते कामः कामात्क्रोधोऽभिजायते ॥

(II. 62)

“The man dwelling on sense-objects develops attachment for them; from attachment springs up desire, and from desire (unfulfilled) ensues anger.”

Here it has been made clear that attachment begets desire and desire in its turn begets anger. Attachment alone is the

root of all evils. Therefore, a man should never in the least conceive any attachment even by mistake for any being, object or action, be it wife, son, money, house, family, pupil, mutt or hermitage, honour, praise or prestige, position, body etc. The root of this attachment is the sense of "I" and "mine" and this sense of "I" and "mine" is the product of ignorance (nescience). We read in the Yoga-Sūtras of Patañjali—

अविद्यास्मितारागद्वेषाभिनिवेशाः क्लेशाः ।
अविद्या क्षेत्रमुत्तरेषाम् ॥

(II. 3-4)

"Nescience (ignorance), the ego sense, attachment, aversion and fear of death are the five afflictions. Of these five afflictions the last four have their root in nescience. In other words, the ego-sense attachment etc., proceed from ignorance."

Therefore, the root of all suffering is attachment and attachment has its root in nescience (ignorance). Doubt, delusion and perversion too proceed from ignorance. Ignorance is destroyed by true wisdom and for the attainment of that true wisdom many ways and means have been laid down in the Śāstras. Devotion to God leads to spiritual enlightenment through Divine Grace. The Lord says to Arjuna—

मच्छित्ता मद्गतप्राणा बोधयन्तः परस्परम् ।
कथयन्तश्च मां नित्यं तुष्यन्ति च रमन्ति च ॥

(Gītā X. 9)

"With their mind fixed on Me, and their lives surrendered to Me, (nay) enlightening one another about My greatness and speaking of Me, My devotees ever remain contented and take delight in Me."

तेषां सततयुक्तानां भजतां प्रीतिपूर्वकम् ।
ददामि बुद्धियोगं तं येन मामुपयान्ति ते ॥

(X. 10)

"On those ever united through meditation with Me and

worshipping Me with love, I confer that Yoga of wisdom through which they come to Me."

तेषामेवानुकम्पार्थमहमज्ञानं
नाशयाम्यात्मभावस्थो ज्ञानदीपेन भास्वता ॥

(X. 11)

"In order to shower My grace on them I, dwelling in their heart, dispel the darkness born of ignorance by the shining light of wisdom."

Again, true wisdom automatically dawns in a heart purified by the practice of Karmayoga, which consists in discharging one's duties in a disinterested spirit—

न हि ज्ञानेन सदृशं पवित्रमिह विद्यते ।
तत्स्वयं योगसंसिद्धः कालेनात्मनि विन्दति ॥

(IV. 38)

"On earth there is no purifier as great as Knowledge; he who has attained purity of heart through a prolonged practice of Karmayoga automatically sees the light of Truth in the self in course of time."

This true wisdom is attained even through the grace of exalted souls by pursuing the course of spiritual discipline chalked out by them—

तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया ।
उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥

(Gītā IV. 34)

"Understand the true nature of that knowledge by approaching illumined souls. If you prostrate at their feet, render them service, and question them with an open and guileless heart, those wise seers of Truth will instruct you in that Knowledge."

यज्ञात्वा न पुनर्मोहमेवं यास्यसि पाण्डव ।
येन भूतान्यशेषेण द्रक्ष्यस्यात्मन्यस्थो मयि ॥

(IV. 35)

“Arjuna, when you have reached enlightenment, ignorance will delude you no more. In the light of that Knowledge you will see the entire creation first within your own self, and then in Me (the Oversoul).”

And true wisdom can be acquired even by studying scriptures like the Gītā with an eye to their meaning and spirit. The Lord says—

स्वाध्यायज्ञानयज्ञाश्च यतयः संशितव्रताः ॥

(Latter half of Gītā IV. 28)

“While some striving souls, observing austere vows, perform sacrifice in the shape of wisdom through the study of sacred texts.”

And referring to the man who undertakes a study of the Gītā, the Lord says, “By him who reads this sacred dialogue between us in the form of the Gītā, I shall be worshipped through Jñāna-Yajña (sacrifice in the form of wisdom)” (Gītā XVIII.70). He attains real wisdom in this way. Faith and reverence are the principal factors figuring in the attainment of this true wisdom.

श्रद्धावाँल्लभते ज्ञानं तत्परः संयतेन्द्रियः ।

ज्ञानं लब्ध्वा परां शान्तिमचिरेणाधिगच्छति ॥

(Gītā IV. 39)

“He who has mastered his senses, is exclusively devoted to his practice and is full of faith, attains knowledge; having had the revelation of Truth, he immediately attains supreme peace (in the form of God-realization).”

But whatever is done without reverence is infructuous—

अश्रद्धया हुतं दत्तं तपस्तप्तं कृतं च यत् ।

असदित्युच्यते पार्थं न च तत्प्रेत्य नो इह ॥

(Gītā XVII. 28)

“An oblation which is offered, a gift given, an austerity practised, and whatever good deed is performed, without

faith, it is all termed as naught; therefore, it is of no avail here or hereafter."

Therefore, all noble pursuits should be undertaken with reverence.

Reverence is acquired through purification of the mind—

सत्त्वानुरूपा सर्वस्य श्रद्धा भवति भारत।

श्रद्धामयोऽयं पुरुषो यो यच्छ्रद्धः स एव सः ॥

(Gītā XVII. 3)

"The faith of all men conforms to their mental constitution, O Arjuna. This man consists of faith; whatever the nature of his faith, he is really that."

One's mind gets purified through the practice of Devotion, Self-knowledge and Yoga carried on with discernment and dispassion. Therefore, a man will be well-advised to practise anyone of the aforesaid three disciplines of Devotion, Self-knowledge and Yoga, in which he feels interested and which inspires his faith, with discernment and dispassion and with supreme zeal and assiduity, making it the aim of his life.



The Secret of the Lord's Disposition

It is due to the Lord's grace and not as a result of our own doings that we have been blessed with a human body. The Lord has made a benign rule that however great a sinner one may be He invariably invests the Jīva with a human body with a view to redeeming its soul when the Jīva has completed its round of rebirth by passing through all the sub-human states of existence numbering eighty-four lakhs. When the immortal soul gets sick of being reborn in succession in all the species of life numbering eighty-four lakhs, the all-merciful Lord takes pity on it and blesses it as a rule with a human body. Says Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa in his Rāmacaritamānasa—

“This immortal soul goes round through eighty-four lakhs of species of life falling under four broad divisions. Driven by Māyā (My deluding potency) and encompassed by Time, Destiny, Nature and phenomenal existence, it ever drifts along. Rarely does God, who loves the Jīva without any interest of His own, graciously bestow on it a human form.” *

(VII. xlvi. 2-3)

How noble is this disposition of the Lord, full of gratuitous compassion and loving benignity! Realizing this benign disposition a man attains supreme peace in the form of God-realization. The Lord says in the Gītā—

सुहृदं सर्वभूतानां ज्ञात्वा मां शान्तिमृच्छति ॥

(Latter half of V. 29)

* आकर चारि लच्छ चौरासी । जोनि भ्रमत यह जिव अविनासी ॥
फिरत सदा माया कर प्रेरा । काल कर्म सुभाव गुन धेरा ॥
कबहुँक करि करुना नर देही । देत ईस बिनु हेतु सनेही ॥

“Having known Me in reality as the disinterested friend of all beings, My devotee attains peace.”

The idea is that the Lord has all His desires fulfilled at all times. Yet being supremely compassionate by nature. He continues to do good and sheer good to all, spontaneously showering His grace on them in a gratuitous spirit and, descending on the material plane from time to time, enacts blissful sports of various kinds, hearing of which men get devoted to Him and cross the ocean of mundane existence. We read in Śrīmad Bhāgavata—

अनुग्रहाय भूतानां मानुषं देहमास्थितः ।
भजते तादृशीः क्रीडा याः श्रुत्वा तत्परो भवेत् ॥

(X. xxxiii. 37)

“Having assumed a human semblance in order to shower His grace on (and attract solely towards Him) created beings, the Lord indulges in sports like the Rāsa-play, hearing of which man may get exclusively devoted to Him.”

Every act of the Lord has the potentiality of doing good to the world. Every dispensation of the Lord concerning living beings is full of compassion and love. A man who, having fully known this secret, persuades himself to believe that the Lord is his disinterested friend, that whatever He does, He does only for his good remains ever cheerful and contented, taking all that happens under every circumstance as an all-benign dispensation, permeated with love and compassion, of the supremely compassionate Lord, and is thereby enabled to attain the highest joy and supreme peace.

That all-powerful, supremely compassionate and supremely loving Lord, the paramount Ruler of all the worlds, the Tamer of all, the Inner Controller of all living beings, the Ocean of unending hosts of virtues, proclaims Himself to be the disinterested friend of all living beings. It is difficult

even to estimate the measure of the transcendent joy and the unprecedented peace that a man derives when he comes to believe the said dictum of the Lord and recognizes Him as his disinterested friend. Really speaking, the Lord is His own compeer. None else in the world is so motivelessly compassionate and gratuitously disposed to do the highest good as He. Says Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa in his Rāmacaritamānasa—

“Umā, there is no such friend as Śrī Rāma in this world—neither preceptor nor father, nor mother, nor brother, nor master.”*

(IV. xi. 1)

Our parents, kinsmen and relations—all love us in their own interest, none does so in a gratuitous spirit. In the Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad sage Yājñavalkya tells his wife, Maitreyī, that one's husband, wife, son, wealth etc., are all dear because of one's interest in them.

न वा अरे सर्वस्य कामाय सर्वं प्रियं भवत्यात्मनस्तु कामाय सर्वं प्रियं भवति ।

(II. iv. 5)

“In fact, O Maitreyī, all is dear not in the interest of all, but all is dear in the interest of one's own self.”

Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa also says in the Rāmacaritamānasa—

“Gods, human beings and ascetics:—all as a rule have some selfish motive behind their love.”†

“Everyone else in this world has his own axe to grind; no one thinks of other's highest interests even in a dream.”‡

(VII. xlvi. 3)

The Lord, however, loves His creatures without any interest of His own; how noble and benevolent is His disposition full of gratuitous love which knows no bounds!

* उमा राम सम हित जग माहीं । गुरु पितु मातु बंधु प्रभु नाहीं ॥

† सुर नर मुनि सब कै यह रीती । स्वारथ लागि करहिं सब प्रीती ॥

‡ स्वारथ मीत सकल जग माहीं । सपनेहुं प्रभु परमारथ नाहीं ॥

Even if a man happens to be the vilest sinner, the moment he seeks the protection of the Lord with exclusive devotion the Lord purifies and redeems him.

Lord Śrī Rāma proclaims in Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa—

“I will not abandon even the murderer of millions of Brāhmaṇas, if he seeks refuge in Me. The moment a creature turns its face towards Me, the sins incurred by it through millions of lives are washed away.....And if he (Vibhīṣaṇa) has sought shelter with Me out of fear, I will cherish him as My own life.”* (V. xlvi. 1—4)

“Again and again, I repeat to you the truth that no one is so dear to Me as My devotee... And the humblest creature that breathes, if possessed of Devotion, is dear to Me as life : such is My nature.”†

(Ibid. VII. lxxxv. 4-5)

“The Lord never cherishes in His mind the lapse, if any, on the part of a devotee; while He remembers the latter’s spirit (of Devotion) a hundred times.”‡

(Ibid. I. xxviii. 3)

Nay, the Lord rids of fear (for all time) the man who solicits His protection and submits to Him even once with a sincere heart that he belongs to Him. The Lord Himself says in the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki—

सकृदेव प्रपन्नाय तवास्मीति च याचते ।
अभयं सर्वभूतेभ्यो ददाम्येतद् व्रतं मम ॥

(VI. xviii. 33)

How sublime is the disposition of the Lord ! He takes

* कोटि बिप्र बध लागहिं जाहू । आएँ सरन तजडँ नहिं ताहू ॥
सनमुख होइ जीव मोहि जबहीं । जन्म कोटि अघ नासहिं तबहीं ॥

जाँ सभीत आवा सरनाई । रखिहडँ ताहि प्रान की नाई ॥

† पुनि पुनि सत्य कहडँ तोहि पाहीं । मोहि सेवक सम प्रिय कोउ नाहीं ॥
भगतिवंत अति नीचउ प्रानी । मोहि प्रानप्रिय असि मम बानी ॥

‡ रहति न प्रभु चित चूक किए की । करत सुरति सय बार हिए की ॥

into account the devotee's love alone and never looks into his pedigree and kinship, wealth, learning, intellect, physical strength and so on.

While glorifying the Lord in Śrīmad Bhāgavata the devotee Prahlāda says—

मन्ये धनाभिजनस्तपतपःश्रुतौज-
स्तेजःप्रभावबलपौरुषबुद्धियोगः ।
नाराधनाय हि भवन्ति परस्य पुंसो
भक्त्या तुतोष भगवानाजयूथपाय ।

(VII. ix. 9)

“Wealth, pedigree, comeliness of form, asceticism, learning, keenness of the senses, splendour, glory, bodily strength, self-endeavour, intelligence and Yoga (concentration of mind or breath-control), I believe, are not sufficient for the propitiation of the Supreme Person. For (on the other hand) the Lord was pleased with the leader of a herd of (wild) elephants through (mere) Devotion.”

For the Lord takes into account only the undivided love of the devotee. None is so dear to the Lord as one who loves Him exclusively.

Says the Lord in Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā—

तेषां ज्ञानी नित्ययुक्त एकभक्तिर्विशिष्यते ।
प्रियो हि ज्ञानिनोऽत्यर्थमहं स च मम प्रियः ॥

(VII. 17)

“Of these the best is the man of wisdom, constantly established in identity with Me and possessed of exclusive devotion. For, extremely dear am I to the wise man (who knows Me in reality), and he is extremely dear to Me.”

Sage Bṛhaspati (the preceptor of gods) says to Indra (the ruler of gods) in Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa—

"Hear our precept, O king of gods ! A devotee is supremely dear to Śrī Rāma"*(II. ccxviii. 1).

* सन् सरेस उपदेस् हमारा । रामहि सेवकु परम पिआरा ॥

Lord Śrī Rāma Himself says to Kākabhuṣundi in the same book:—

“O bird, I tell you in all sincerity that a guileless servant is dear to Me as life. Realizing this, worship Me, abandoning all other hope and reliance.”*

(VII. lxxxvii.)

Therefore, giving up all other hope and reliance, we should practise exclusive Devotion to the Lord in a motiveless spirit.

Prince Bharata was a supreme devotee of the Lord and knew the reality and secret of the Lord's disposition. He cherished a most sublime devotion to the Lord. Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa has drawn an exquisite pen-picture of his noble sentiments in the following lines reproduced from his Rāmacaritamānasa—

“The Lord of the Raghus is an embodiment of amiability, meekness, extreme guilelessness of disposition, compassion and love. Śrī Rāma has never done an ill turn even to an enemy, to say nothing of Me, a mere child and his servant too, though hostile to Him.”†

(II.clxxxii.3)

“As for Śrī Rāma He has illumined the world by being born in it; He is such an ocean of beauty, amiability, joy and all excellences. Śrī Rāma's disposition is the delight of the people of Ayodhyā and His own family, much more of His preceptor and parents. Even enemies praise Śrī Rāma, Who steals the heart by His polite speech, agreeable manners and modesty of behaviour. Millions of Śāradās (goddesses

* सत्य कहडँ खग तोहि सुचि सेवक मम प्रानप्रिय।

अस बिचारि भजु मोहि परिहरि आस भरोस सब॥

† सील सकुच सुठि सरल सुभाऊ। कृपा सनेह सदन रघुराऊ॥

अरिहुक अनभल कोन्ह न रामा। मैं सिसु सेवक जद्यपि बामा॥

of speech) and hundreds of millions of Śeṣas (serpent-gods) are unable to reckon up the virtues of the Lord.”*

(Ibid. II. excix 3-4)

“Whenever he thought of Śrī Rāma’s good nature, his feet moved quickly along the way.”†

(Ibid. II. ccxxxiii. 3)

“I know the disposition of my master, Who is never angry even with the offender. To me He has been particularly kind and affectionate; I have never seen Him frown even in play. Even from my infancy I never left His company and at no time did He damp my spirits. I have realized in my heart the benevolent ways of my Lord, Who would have me win a game even though I had lost it.”‡

(Ibid. II. cclix. 3-4)

□ □

* राम जनमि जगु कीन्ह उजागर । रूप सील सुख सब गुन सागर ॥

पुरजन परिजन गुर पितु माता । राम सुभाउ सबहि सुखदाता ॥

बैरिठ राम बड़ाई करहीं । बोलनि मिलनि बिनय मन हरहीं ॥

सारद कोटि कोटि सत सेषा । करि न सकहि प्रभु गुन गन लेखा ॥

† जब समुझत रघुनाथ सुभाऊ । तब पथ परत उताइल पाऊ ॥

‡ मैं जानड़ निज नाथ सुभाऊ । अपराधिहु पर कोह न काऊ ॥

मो पर कृपा सनेहु बिसेषी । खेलत खुनिस न कबहुँ देखी ॥

सिसुपन तें परिहरेड़ न संगू । कबहुँ न कीन्ह मोर मन भंगू ॥

मैं प्रभु कृपा रीति जियूं जोही । हरेहुँ खेल जितावहिं मोही ॥

The Truth and Secret of the Lord's Essential Character, Birth, Doings, Virtues, Glory and Utterances

The glory of the essential character, birth, doings, virtues, power and utterances of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is endless and unbounded. People remain deprived of God-realization only because of their ignorance about the truth and secret of all these. Their truth and mystery can be grasped only when one develops faith in and reverence for God. Even if a man is the worst sinner, God-realization is not difficult for him to attain if he develops love for the Lord; on the other hand, it can be easily and speedily attained (Gītā VIII. 14; IX. 30-31). And once a man develops love for the Lord he can never forget Him nor can the Lord ever forget him. The Lord begins to appear to him everywhere at all times and everything begins to appear to him as existing in the Lord; nay, he gets absorbed in the Lord, and all his activities begin to get centred in the Lord (Gītā VI. 30-31). In order to attain this state it is essential fully to grasp the truth and secret of the Lord's essential character, birth, doings, virtues, glory and utterances. Hence an attempt is being made in the following lines to discuss all these in a nutshell one after another.

The Truth and Secret of the Lord's Essential Character

Even as the atoms of water, vapour, clouds, drops of water and hailstones etc., are all water, so God with attributes and without attributes, God endowed with a form and devoid of form, the Manifest as well as the Unmanifest,

Matter and the Spirit, the mobile and the immobile Creation, the existent and the non-existent and so on, all this comprises the essence of God.

This is the truth about the essence of God and the fact that the said unborn, imperishable, omniscient, omnipotent, integral Brahma or the Supreme Spirit Itself assumes a divine form and appears in the world and the fact that, securing His blessed sight, talking with Him, thinking of Him and bowing to Him, even sinners get supremely hallowed, constitute the secret of His essential character.

That Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa embodied in Himself the integral Brahma or the Supreme Spirit has been affirmed by Arjuna, the devotee, as well as by all the Ṛṣis (the seers of Vedic Mantras) and even by the Lord Himself. In the Gītā, Arjuna tells Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa—

परं ब्रह्म परं धाम पवित्रं परमं भवान् ।
 पुरुषं शाश्वतं दिव्यमादिदेवमजं विभुम् ॥
 आहुस्त्वामृषयः सर्वे देवर्षिनारदस्तथा ।
 असितो देवलो व्यासः स्वयं चैव ब्रवीषि मे ॥

(X.12-13)

“You are the transcendent Eternal, the supreme Abode and the greatest purifier; all the seers speak of You as the eternal Divine Person, the First Deity, unborn and all-pervading. Likewise speak the celestial sage Nārada, the sages Asita and Devala and (the great sage) Vyāsa; and so do You Yourself proclaim this to me.”

The exalted soul who knows the truth and mystery of both with attributes and the Absolute, the embodied and the formless aspects of God realizes the presence of God alone in the form of this animate and inanimate creation, perceives nothing other than God and as such is as good as having realized God (Gītā VII. 19; X. 39).

The Truth and Secret of the Lord's Birth

Though free from birth and death, the Lord appears to deluded men as though being born and dying. Really speaking, He appears and disappears only. When Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa made His appearance behind the prison-bars, He was not born in the form of a babe like human beings. The Bhāgavata says—

देवक्यां	देवरूपिण्यां	विष्णुः	सर्वगुहाशयः ।
आविरासीद्	यथा	प्राच्यां	दिशीन्दुरिव पुष्कलः ॥
तमद्भुतं			बालकमम्बुजेक्षणं
	चतुर्भुजं		शङ्खगदार्युदायुधम् ।
श्रीवत्सलक्ष्मं			गलशोभिकौस्तुभं
पीताम्बरं			सान्द्रपयोदसौभगम् ॥

(X. iii. 8-9)

“Lord Viṣṇu, the Indweller of all hearts, manifested Himself in His entirety through Devakī—who possessed a form similar to that of a goddess (being an incarnation of Aditi, the mother of the gods)—even as the full moon would appear in the eastern horizon. Vasudeva beheld that extraordinary boy with lotus-eyes, endowed with four-arms wielding uplifted weapons (and other emblems) such as a conch, a mace and a discus, bearing on his bosom the mark of Śrivatsa (a golden curl of hair characteristic of Lord Viṣṇu), clad in yellow (silk) and possessing the charm of a cloud laden with moisture, with the Kaustubha gem shining at His neck.”

In the same way when He left for His supreme Divine Abode, He did so bodily rather than cast off His Avatāra body.

लोकाभिरामां स्वतनुं धारणाध्यानमङ्गलम् ।
योगधारणयाऽऽनेत्यादगच्छा धामाविशत् स्वकम् ॥

(Ibid. XI. xxxi. 6)

“Not consuming through concentration of mind on the

element of fire, His own (divine) body, which delighted the (entire) universe and is the all-blissful object of meditation and concentration, He (bodily) ascended to His own (divine) realm."

From the above premises it is concluded that Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa appeared on earth and vanished, not that He was born and died.

When, at the end of Discourse X of Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā, Arjuna learns from the lips of the Lord that the whole universe is comprised in a fraction of His being, the former requests Him at the beginning of Discourse XI to reveal to him His aforesaid Cosmic Form. Thereupon the Lord reveals to him His Cosmic Form. Subsequently when Arjuna implores Him in XI. 46 to withdraw His Cosmic Form and show him His four-armed form, the Lord shows to him His four-armed form as desired by him (XI. 50). Later on, however, the Lord withdraws even His four-armed form and resumes His human semblance (XI. 51). What else does it point to than the appearance and disappearance of His Cosmic and four-armed divine Forms?

Though Śrī Kṛṣṇa was none other than the Supreme Spirit endowed with a visible form, He moved on earth in a human semblance. Fools, however, who failed to grasp this truth and secret, despised Him and thereby brought about their downfall only (IX.11). In the Mahābhārata too Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself tells king Yudhiṣṭhīra, who was an embodiment of piety—

मानुष्यं भावमापनं ये मां गृह्णन्यवज्जया ।
संसारान्तर्हि ते मूढास्तिर्यग्योनिष्वनेकशः ॥

(Āśva., Vaiṣṇava.)

"Those who despise Me as having taken a human birth, are fools and are repeatedly born in sub-human forms in this world."

For the Lord keeps Himself hidden behind the curtain of Māyā to those unworthy men who do not repose faith in Him and are lacking in reverence. Hence those foolish men fail to recognize Him.

Pressing into service His own Prakṛti (Nature), the Lord appears (in our midst) of His own free will by dint of His divine power known by the name of Yogamāyā. The appearance and disappearance of the Lord are altogether different from the way in which our bodies come into being and get dissolved. In the first place the stuff of His body is spiritual, transcendent, divine and supramundane; while the stuff of which our body is made, is gross, material, Mayic (illusory) and mundane. Secondly, the virtuous and sinful deeds of our past lives are responsible for our birth in the material universe; while the good of the world is the *raison d'etre* of the Lord's appearance in the world of matter. Appearing in the world of matter, He delivers men of noblest conduct and destroys those of wicked conduct and propagates righteousness and Devotion to Him in the world (Gītā IV. 8). This constitutes the transcendence of His birth. He who comes to know the truth and secret of it is not only blessedness incarnate himself but can also redeem others.

The truth about His birth is that in whatever form the Lord descends into the world of matter at a particular period of time, it is the attributeless and formless integral Brahma or the Supreme Spirit who is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss rolled into one, that appears in that form. To grasp this truth fully is what is meant by realizing the truth of His birth. And it is the *raison d'etre* of His descent—viz., that He appears in our midst whenever there is decline of righteousness and growth of sin and, descending into the world of matter, He eradicates sin and establishes righteousness—that constitutes the secret of His descent

into the world of matter. To comprehend this secret fully is what is meant by knowing the secret of His birth.

Descending into the world of matter, the Lord not only redeems men of good conduct and His devotees but also delivers the wicked and the evil-doers by punishing them, as for instance Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa delivered even the wicked Pūtanā by making short work of her. The devotee Uddhava says—

अहो बकी यं स्तनकालकूटं जिघांसयापाययदप्यसाध्वी ।
लेभे गतिं धाक्रयुचितां ततोऽन्यं कं वा दयालुं शरणं व्रजेम ॥

(Śrīmad Bhāgavata III. ii. 23)

“Oh, even that impious woman Pūtanā (the sister of the demon Baka)—who suckled Him (as a Babe) at her breast, which was daubed with a most deadly poison, with intent to kill Him—got from Him (in return) the destiny appropriate to a foster-mother ! Is there anyone so merciful, whom we should resort to for protection, other than Him?”

In this way the fact that even the destruction of the wicked at His hands has the motive of delivering them behind it constitutes the secret of His descent into the world of matter. And that even ordinary men can be easily redeemed by hearing of, dwelling on and recounting the virtues and glory etc., of an Avatāra of God also constitutes a secret of the Lord’s descent into the world of matter, which cannot be grasped without His grace. By the grace of God, of course, it is easy and convenient to grasp it. Although Divine Grace fully extends over all in an infinite degree people fail to recognize it due to lack of faith and reverence and in consequence of this failure they remain deprived of the great boon in the shape of God-realization. Those wise men, however, who recognize the grace of God are able to grasp the truth and secret of His descent into the world of matter and make the most of it.

The Truth and Secret of the Lord's Doings

The doings (pastimes) of the Lord are also divine. Every activity of ours is full of blemishes in the shape of the sense of 'I' and 'mine', attachment, selfishness, self-esteem etc., while the doings of the Lord are totally free from all these blemishes. And even though it is God who evolves the whole universe according to the *Guṇas* and actions of each individual being, such action on His part is truly speaking as good as inaction, inasmuch as He is devoid of the sense of doership (*Gītā* IV. 13). The Lord has no selfish motive behind the exploits He performs in the course of His descent into the world of matter; He does everything only for the good of all. The actions even of the man who comes to know the truth of it are free from the sense of mine, attachment, desire, self-interest and the sense of doership and are intended solely for the welfare of the world. He does not do anything, actions only proceed from him. What he 'did' before now only 'comes to be'.

The behaviour of the Lord is most out of the common. The Lord assumes that very role with which a devotee invests Him (*Gītā* IV.11). The Lord behaves like a suitor in relation to a girl devotee who seeks Him as a match, as Śrī Kṛṣṇa did in the case of princess Rukmiṇī. He plays the immaculate role of a darling and behaves as such in relation to a devotee of the other sex who approaches Him as a sweetheart, as Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa did in the case of the cowherd maids of Vraja. The Lord assumes the role of a loving master in relation to those who approach Him as a servant, as Śrī Kṛṣṇa did in the case of Sañjaya and others. He assumes the role of a friend in relation to those who worship Him as a friend, as Śrī Kṛṣṇa did in the case of cowherd boys and others. He assumes the combined role of a master and a friend in relation to those who worship Him

as a master and a friend in one, as Śrī Kṛṣṇa did in the case of Arjuna and others. He assumes the role of a son in relation to those who love Him as such, as He did in the case of Nanda-Yaśodā and others.

Even so the Lord seeks His devotees in the same way as His devotees worship Him. The Lord too contemplates on the devotee who contemplates on Him, as for instance, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa contemplated on Bhīṣma, the common grand-uncle of the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas, when the hero contemplated on Him while lying on his bed of arrows. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself pointed out this fact to emperor Yudhiṣṭhīra when the latter called on Him to express his gratitude to the Lord for restoring to him his lost sovereignty (Mahā., Śānti. xlviii. 11). Just imagine who else than the Lord can show such a supramundane behaviour. All these dealings of the Lord are inspired by benevolence, love, compassion, magnanimity, fondness for His devotees and other most excellent sentiments.

When Brahmā (the creator) was seized with infatuation to behold Śrī Kṛṣṇa engaged in His boyish pastimes, he removed the cowherd boys (with whom the Lord was playing) as well as the calves (whom He was pasturing) and placed them in a cave. Knowing this, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who embodied in Himself the integral Brahma, Himself assumed the form of those very cowherd boys and calves (Śrīmad Bhāgavata, X. xiii. 19). Therefore, to recognize the aforesaid cowherd boys and calves as the Lord Himself, is to grasp the truth of this particular pastime of the Lord. Even Śrī Balarāma (the elder brother of Śrī Kṛṣṇa) could not know this secret. Again, to realize that the Lord enacted this pastime also to vouchsafe to the cows and the cowherdesses, the joy of bestowing at will their parental love on Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is to grasp the secret of this pastime.

In this way the doings even of the devotee, who comes to know the truth and secret of the fact that the exploits of the Lord are wonderful, supramundane, transcendent and divine, acquire sanctity of a similar character. He alone who throws himself at the mercy of the Lord with faith and reverence in everyway can know by grace of God the truth and secret of His Divine Play.

In this way he who comes to know the truth and secret of the divine character of the birth and doings of the Lord realizes Him and never returns to this world after death. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself says—

जन्म कर्म च मे दिव्यमेवं यो वेत्ति तत्त्वतः ।
त्यक्त्वा देहं पुनर्जन्म नैति मामेति सोऽर्जुन ॥

(Gītā IV. 9)

“Arjuna, My birth and activities are divine. He who knows this in reality does not take birth again on leaving his body, but attains Me.”

□ □

Lessons on Reverence etc., in the Story of Śrī Rāma

We should derive lessons on reverence, love, conduct etc., from the story of Śrī Rāma. The highest limit of reverence lies in following the injunctions and gestures of the object of one's reverence. Where it is not possible to follow his injunctions, the continuance of life becomes difficult for a reverent soul. And the highest peak of love is reached when separation from one's object of love becomes unbearable. The continuance of the life of a lover becomes difficult when the beloved gets disunited. King Daśaratha, for example, loved Lord Śrī Rāma and he breathed his last when he got disunited from Śrī Rāma. Lord Śrī Rāma was full of reverence for his father. Although the emperor did not expressly enjoin Śrī Rāma to leave for the forest, he had already granted boons to Kaikeyī. Taking this to be his implicit command, Śrī Rāma cheerfully relinquished the sovereignty of Ayodhyā and left for the forest—although Sītā, mother Kausalyā and Lakṣmaṇa did not approve of it—and did not return to Ayodhyā even though entreated by Bharata.

The love of Sītā too for Śrī Rāma was highly commendable. Picturing to her while leaving for the forest the terrible sufferings one has to undergo in a forest, Lord Śrī Rāma urged Sītā to stay behind in Ayodhyā for rendering service to her parents-in-law. Sītā, however, replied, "My Lord, all the hardships enumerated by you, are nothing as compared to the pangs of separation from You. Therefore, pray, take me with You." She also said—

“When my heart refuses to be rent even on hearing such cruel words, I am sure my wretched self shall live to bear the terrible pangs of separation from my Lord!” *

Lord Śrī Rāma readily perceived that, if kept behind in Ayodhyā against her will, Sītā would give up the ghost rather than abandon her resolve to accompany him. He, therefore, took her with him. It may be asked here: “When Rāvana bore Sītā away and she was compelled to stay in Laṅkā, how did she survive?” To this our reply is that throughout her forced sojourn in Laṅkā she remained engaged in muttering the name, and meditating on the form of the Lord, with the result that her life was confined in a prison. Her eyes, which were rivetted on her feet, served as a lock, while uninterrupted Japa of the Lord’s Name played the role of a warder. Thus no outlet was left for her life to depart. On being questioned by Śrī Rāma as to how Sītā managed to sustain her life, Hanumān (the monkey-god) replied—

“Your Name keeps watch night and day, while her continued thought on You, acts as a pair of closed doors. She has her eyes fastened on her own feet; her life thus finds no outlet whereby to escape.” †

Some may ask here “How did Sītā survive when she was abandoned by Śrī Rāma for all time to come?” Our reply to this question is that in order to avoid public scandal Śrī Rāma on that occasion enjoined Laksmaṇa to leave Sītā near the hermitage of sage Vālmīki. Hence the exile of Sītā

* ऐसेत बचन कठोर सुनि जौं न हृदउ बिलगान।
तौ प्रभु बिषम बियोग दुख सहिहिं पावैं प्रान॥

(Rāmacaritamānasa. II. 67)

† नाम पाहरू दिवस निसि ध्यान तुम्हार कपाट।
लोचन निज पद जंत्रित जाहिं प्रान केहिं बाट॥

(Ibid. V. 30)

was enjoined by Śrī Rāma and to a reverent soul, carrying out the bidding of the object of one's reverence is the paramount duty. Sītā, therefore, preserved her life only in obedience to the Lord's behest. Sītā even told Lakṣmaṇa on that occasion that she was in the family way, otherwise she would have given up the ghost at once, and that she was preserving her life only with the object of perpetuating the line of her husband.

Śatrughna too likewise cherished very deep reverence and love for Śrī Rāma. In the Uttara Kāṇḍa of Śrīmad Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa we read how on the question of disposing of the demon Lavaṇa cropping up before Śrī Rāma, the latter wished to know who would kill the demon. Thereupon Bharata undertook to kill Lavaṇāsura and requested to be entrusted with that duty. Śatrughna interposed, saying: "Bharata has already done many daring acts. He has suffered great hardships even while practising austerities at Nandigrāma. Hence he should not be subjected to any further ordeal when his servant in my person is present." The Lord acquiesced in his proposal and said, "Very well, Śatrughna! you had better go and after killing Lavaṇāsura should establish yourself as the ruler of his kingdom. I expect you not to utter a word in protest." Śatrughna felt very ashamed and submitted in reply: "My Lord, although it is not in the fitness of things that a younger brother should be installed on the throne so long as his elder brothers are there: no alternative is now left for me but to carry out your orders. Really speaking, when Bharata undertook to kill Lavaṇāsura, I should not have interrupted him at all. A suitable punishment has been meted out to me for the offence committed by me. Had I not interposed, you would not have asked me to go and rule over the kingdom of Lavaṇāsura." With a heavy

heart he then left for the kingdom of Lavanāsura and after making short work of him ruled over His territory.

When Lord Śrī Rāma was about to depart for His supreme Divine Abode, He summoned His friends and brothers to His presence. Fearing that the Lord might enjoin him to stay behind in Ayodhyā, Śatrughna sought his presence and submitted as follows—"Since You are leaving for good for Your supreme Abode, I too shall accompany You. I have the impudence to implore You not to command me otherwise; for I do not wish that I should flout Your command." Śatrughna was unable to bear separation from the Lord, hence the Lord took him with Him.

In the Pātāla-Khaṇḍa of Padma-Purāṇa we are told how to avoid public scandal Śrī Rāma commanded Śatrughna to take Sītā with him and leave her near the hermitage of sage Vālmīki. Śatrughna dropped down unconscious on hearing this. Failure to do the bidding of his master reduced him to the aforesaid plight. Śatrughna mostly spent his life in the company of Bharata; therefore the reverence and love of Śatrughna for Śrī Rāma should be concluded to be on a par with those cherished by Bharata.

Lakṣmaṇa too had unbounded reverence and love for Śrī Rāma. From the beginning till the very end Lakṣmaṇa lived in the company of Śrī Rāma. He never lived apart from the latter of his own will. If he ever lived apart from Śrī Rāma he did so under orders of the latter and that too very seldom.

While going to the forest Śrī Rāma said to Lakṣmaṇa, "Brothers, Bharata and Śatrughna are not here, father is aged and is disconsolate on My score; therefore, remaining here, serve you Our father and mothers." Lakṣmaṇa felt extremely nonplussed the moment he heard this and, clasping the feet of the Lord, submitted as follows—

“My Lord, You have given me a salutary advice; but due to my faint-heartedness it sounds impracticable to me.....Whatever ties of affection, love and confidence exist in the world as declared by the Vedas—for me they are all centred in You and You alone, my Lord. O friend of the afflicted, O knower of the innermost heart of all ! Piety and propriety should be taught to him who is fond of glory, fortune and a noble destiny. He, however, who is devoted to Your feet in thought, word and deed—should he be abandoned, O ocean of grace?”*

The Lord feared that Lakṣmaṇa would give up the ghost. Hence He said, “Go and take leave of Sumitrā.” Sought leave of by him, Sumitrā forthwith replied—

“If Sītā and Rāma are really proceeding to the woods, you have no business in Ayodhyā.....”

“It is due to your good fortune that Rāma is proceeding to the forest; there is no other ground for his doing so, my boy.”†

Then Lakṣmaṇa joyfully left for the forest with Śrī Rāma.

When Lord Śrī Rāma told Lakṣmaṇa that to avoid

* दीन्हि	मोहि	सिख	नीकि	गोसाई।		
		लागि	अगम	अपनी	कदराई॥	
जहँ	लगि	जगत	सनेह	सगाई।		
मोरे	सबइ	प्रीति	प्रतीति	निगम	निजु	गाई॥
मन	क्रम	एक	तुम्ह	स्वामी।		
		दीनबंधु		उर		अंतरजामी॥

(Ibid., II. Ixxi. 1, 3-4)

† जाँ पै सीय रामु बन जाहीं। अवध तुम्हार काजु कछु नाहीं॥

तुम्हरेहि भाग रामु बन जाहीं। दूसर हेतु तात कछु नाहीं॥

(Ibid., II Ixxiii. 2-3)

public scandal He had renounced Sītā and asked him to take her to the precincts of the hermitage of sage Vālmīki and leave her there, it was a most cruel duty on the part of Lakṣmaṇa to take Sītā to the forest and leave her there. Yet out of reverence he carried out this stern command; for, to a reverent soul failure to carry out the behest of one's object of reverence is tantamount to death.

We read in the *Uttarakāṇḍa* of Śrīmad Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa that the Time-Spirit himself sought the presence of Lord Śrī Rāma in the garb of an ascetic and secured the latter's consent to the effect that should anyone interrupt them he would be sentenced to death. Lakṣmaṇa was posted on sentinel duty. In the mean time sage Durvāsā made his appearance and sought immediate audience with the Lord. Lakṣmaṇa requested him to wait awhile. Durvāsā peremptorily asked Lakṣmaṇa to announce his presence to Śrī Rāma that very moment, failing which he would curse them all. Lakṣmaṇa preferred to court his own death rather than invite disaster on all. Accordingly he entered the chamber in which Śrī Rāma had been closetted with Kāla and apprised the former of Durvāsā's arrival and of his insistence to meet him at once. Hearing the report of Lakṣmaṇa, Lord Śrī Rāma dismissed Kāla, saw Durvāsā and offered hospitality to him. In the mean time, when put to mind of the understanding he had arrived with Kāla, he sought the advice of sage Vasiṣṭha telling him that although according to the canons of justice Lakṣmaṇa deserved capital punishment at His hands, He was reluctant to put his own brother to death. Vasiṣṭha said, "Abandoning noble souls is as good as sentencing them to death." This resulted in Lakṣmaṇa having been abandoned by Śrī Rāma; but Lakṣmaṇa was too fond of Śrī Rāma to bear separation from Him. Going near the bank of the Sarayū river, he, therefore, gave up the ghost. What a transcendent love!

In this way we get off and on evidences of reverence and love in the conduct of Laksmaṇa too.

As for Bharata it goes without saying that he cherished the highest reverence and love for Śrī Rāma. In fact he was the very embodiment of reverence and love. When he learnt that he alone was responsible for sending Śrī Rāma to the forest, he lashed Kaikeyī with words which he ought not to have used for his own mother, and left for Citrakūṭa to bring Śrī Rāma back to Ayodhyā. In spite of his best endeavours Śrī Rāma, however, did not return but said, "Father has awarded fourteen years' exile in the forest to Me and bestowed the kingship of Ayodhyā on you. Therefore return and carry on the administration of Ayodhyā for fourteen years." Separation from the Lord was unbearable for Bharata, yet out of reverence for Śrī Rāma he returned to Ayodhyā. While returning from Citrakūṭa he submitted to Śrī Rāma, "If You fail to reach Ayodhyā immediately on the expiry of fourteen years, the term of Your exile, I shall enter fire." Coming back to Ayodhyā, he took up his abode at Nandigrāma and began to lead a life of self-restraint and discipline; and when only a day remained of the term of Śrī Rāma's exile, Bharata felt so overwhelmed with love that he found it difficult to survive. He was so full of love that if the Lord did not reach in time he would not have survived. He said on that occasion—

"If I continue to live even on the expiry of the term of (Śrī Rāma's) exile, who would be so despicable as myself?" *

Depicting the state of his desolation, Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa says in his Rāmacaritamānasa—

"While Bharata's mind was thus sinking in the ocean of separation from Śrī Rāma, Hanumān (son of the wind-god),

*बीते अवधि रहहि जौं प्राना । अधम कवन जग मोहि समाना ॥

disguised as a Brāhmaṇa, came like a bark to his rescue. He found Bharata seated on a mat of Kuśa grass, emaciated in body, with a coil of matted hair for a crown and the words “Rāma! Rāma!! Lord of the Raghus!!!” on his lips, his lotus-eyes streaming with tears.” *

When he learnt from Hanumān that Lord Śrī Rāma along with Sītā and Laksmaṇa was returning to Ayodhyā, his joy knew no bounds. His life was saved in the same way as that of a fish, wriggling with uneasiness without water, on being thrown into water again. How sublime was Bharata’s love for Śrī Rāma that even a moment hung heavy on his head like an aeon without Śrī Rāma. This constitutes the highest peak of love. The long and short of it is that practically the whole life of Bharata was permeated with reverence and love.

□ □

* राम बिरह सागर महँ भरत मगन मन होत।

बिप्र रूप धरि पवनसुत आइ गयड जनु पोत॥

बैठि देखि कुसासन जटा मुकुट कृस गात।

राम राम रघुपति जपत स्नवत नयन जलजात॥

(Ibid. VII.i. (a) & (b))

Glory of Saints or Exalted Souls

The fellowship of exalted souls is very difficult to get and, even if it is had, it is difficult to recognize them as such. If, however, their fellowship is cultivated after recognizing them, one is sure to get the great reward in the form of God-realization; for the fellowship of exalted souls never goes in vain. Even if cultivated without knowing them, the fellowship of exalted souls does not cease to bear fruit; for it is unfailing in its effect. The Yoga-Sūtras of Patañjali go so far as to declare that the very thought of exalted souls enables a man to silence his mind forever and realize God—

वीतरागविषयं वा चित्तम् । (I. 30)

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Exalted souls have no relation based on any selfish motive with any living being. Regarding this the Lord Himself says:—

नैव तस्य कृतेनार्थो नाकृतेनेह कश्चन ।
न चास्य सर्वभूतेषु कश्चिच्चर्दर्थव्यपाश्रयः ॥

(Gītā III. 18)

“That exalted soul has no use whatsoever in this world for things done nor for things not done; nor does he have selfish dependence of any kind on any creature.”

Nevertheless actions which are intended exclusively for the good of the entire creation are done by him. Really speaking, it cannot be said that exalted souls who have realized God are non-existent today. Due to lack of faith, however, we are unable to see and recognize them.

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No action of an exalted soul is purposeless. All his

actions are intended for the good—for the welfare of others. If he takes work from others, he does so for their good alone, not for his own sake.

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Exalted souls who get merged in the Supreme Spirit become absolutely one with the latter. To worship them is just the same as to adore the Supreme Spirit.

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The mind of a man gets purified by the very thought of exalted souls, to say nothing of their sight and talking with them.

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The following is a vow of the Lord—

ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम् ।

“Howsoever men seek Me, even so do I approach them.”

That is, however, not the principle followed by exalted souls. The rule with them is: “We love even those who do not love us.”

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Hay is converted into fire both if it is cast into a fire or fire is thrown on a stack of hay. On the same analogy a man who has no knowledge of God turns into an exalted soul both in the event of his approaching the latter and in the event of an exalted soul seeking the presence of that ignorant man; for exalted souls are endowed with the eye of wisdom, which dispels ignorance.

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The wisdom of exalted souls is unfailing in its effect, it never goes in vain. Their fellowship, sight, speech and thought—all yield great results.

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When millions of candles can be lighted from one

ignited candle, what is there to prevent all others from turning into exalted souls if one exalted soul is in existence?

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Even as by knowing the truth about God one becomes one with God, so does one get converted into an exalted soul by knowing the reality about an exalted soul.

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The truth about an exalted soul is realized only when one moulds one's conduct according to the injunctions of an exalted soul.

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A man who develops consummate faith in God or in any exalted soul, gets wholly devoted to Him or to the exalted soul. His faith should be regarded as deficient to the same extent as his devotion is lacking.

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The excellent treatment received from exalted souls should be recognized as coming from God Himself; for it is God alone Who does everything or gets everything done through the medium of an exalted soul.

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There is nothing like meeting a fully exalted soul; for the words that escape from his lips are perfectly balanced. Even as a merchant sells his goods to his customers after duly weighing them and never goes by estimate, so does an exalted soul utter every word after weighing it on the scales of his judgment. His words are invaluable, his actions are (equally) invaluable and his Bhajana (worship of God) is (also) invaluable. Every activity of his mind, speech and body is of great consequence and conformable to Reality. His silence—state of actionlessness too is full of great lessons for the good of the world. Hence his speech, touch,

sight, actions and thoughts, nay, even articles touched by him are considered as purifying.

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If we are able to meet such people and if after recognizing them as such we cultivate their fellowship, which is unfailing in its effect, and if we follow their instructions taking them to be the gospel truth, the very injunction of God, we can redeem not only ourselves but others as well.

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The fellowship of exalted souls is more purifying even than a bath in the holy Gaṅgā or drinking its water. Just as the light of a lamp gets diffused in darkness, so does the light of saints gets diffused all round. Whereas the light of a lamp is material, an exalted soul is an embodiment of spiritual effulgence. His sight deepens our insight. As a result of the fellowship of exalted souls even our minor faults become visible. Our conduct gets improved. Virtues appear in us and our evil traits and immoral practices get eliminated with the result that our heart gets purified. Then even our minute faults come to view and get eradicated through effort. Nobody can misbehave in the presence of devotees of God. Their sight naturally induces God-remembrance.

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A man endowed with exceptional faith and reverence feels at the sight of a devotee of God as if devotion to God, even-mindedness, compassion, tranquillity, love, joy, wisdom and all other virtues are flowing from that exalted soul and entering him. The evil propensities of his mind appear to be consumed as hay by fire and an ocean of compassion and love seems to roll in the eyes of that exalted soul.

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The earth and the sky, the animate and inanimate

creation falling within the range of sight of an exalted soul get hallowed.

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The scriptures declare that Liberation resides in the dust of feet of exalted souls. That is to say, a man gets liberated by placing on his head the dust of feet of exalted souls.

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No trace of stiffness, animosity or hatred exists in exalted souls. They are so compassionate that their heart melts at the sight of others' suffering. They look upon others' interests as their own. Unalloyed compassion dwells in their heart. Compassion which is actuated by pusillanimity, affinity, shame, self-interest, fear etc., is not unalloyed. Like the compassion of God, that of exalted souls is unmotivated and extends to all. However much one may harm them, they never feel inclined to retaliate. If at all they are seen retaliating as it were, such an act of retaliation is intended only to purify the victim of retaliation, ridding him of his vices. Their compassion lies hidden under cover of that act of retaliation.

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Such exalted souls are storehouses of compassion. Whosoever approaches them takes a plunge as it were into an ocean of compassion. A man gets enraptured to catch a glimpse of their spirit of compassion in their sight, talk, touch and thought. Whichever way he goes, he goes about showering compassion as a rainy cloud would pour showers. A cloud, however, does not pour a shower at all times and places; while a saint ever goes on pouring showers everywhere. All living beings get hallowed by their sight, speech, thought and touch. The soil on which their feet rest, gets sanctified. The dust touched by their feet not only gets sanctified itself but acquires the virtue of sanctifying others

too. Even objects seen, thought of and touched by them get hallowed, to say nothing of their family, and particularly their parents, who are responsible for their birth. The territories in which they are born and breathe their last come to be recognized as Tīrthas (places of pilgrimage). All the Tīrthas that have come into existence so far owe their sanctity either to their association with the Lord Himself or to that with His devotees. Not only this, even the so-called Tīrthas, which possess the virtue of sanctifying all men, get hallowed by the touch of the feet of His devotees.

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Whatever is said about the sanctity of exalted souls falls short of the reality. The Lord Himself has glorified them with His own lips.

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THE END

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